

ENTRANCE TO BAZAR, MOSUL

NOTES FROM A DIARY
IN
ASIATIC TURKEY

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Publisher to the India Office

37 BEDFORD STREET

LONDON

1898

Edinburgh : T. and A. CONSTABLE Printers to Her Majesty

TO MY FRIENDS
AND FELLOW-TRAVELLERS
IN ASIATIC TURKEY
VISCOUNT ENCOMBE
SIR JOHN STIRLING-MAXWELL
AND THE
HONOURABLE LIONEL HOLLAND



PREFACE

LITTLE as the introduction or explanation of a preface may appear to be demanded by these unpretentious and discursive notes, it is difficult to treat, however lightly, of a subject as thorny as the Armenian question without incurring a certain risk of being misunderstood.

Of the attitude of English political parties in regard to it I have purposely said but little. The lamentable failure of every critic hitherto to suggest a practicable alternative may surely be regarded as in itself affording strong presumptive evidence that the basis, at all events, of the policy pursued both by Lord Rosebery and Lord Salisbury was not merely sound, but the only one that could have been safely or wisely adopted. Yet there are probably few who would profess any confidence in its permanence, or even hope that in the event of another carnival of riot and bloodshed in the Armenian vilayets the fear of European complications would still restrain Muscovite ambition, or the popular indignation of the Western democracies from active interference.

‘ Turkey has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Her kingdom is, as it were, already divided

and given to others. By herself England can do nothing; and the only possible solution is that which for a hundred years her greatest statesmen have striven to avert—the absorption of the border provinces by Russia.’

Such is the secret conviction which has slowly but surely forced itself upon the mind of the average Englishman who thinks of the subject at all, and who, distrusting equally the inflammatory language of the atrocity-monger and the blind partisanship of the professed Turcophile, feels that the Beaconsfield policy is no longer one which, in the light of recent events, this country can honourably continue to pursue without some modification. Nor may we fairly condemn his verdict as a counsel of despair. It is founded partly on a remorseful misgiving that, had England never interfered to guarantee the integrity of Turkey in her own interests, the Armenians would long ago have been in enjoyment of personal security and religious toleration under civilised rule; and partly on an historical philosophy which regards as not only immoral but hopeless the attempt to arrest the final dissolution of an Empire whose gradual disintegration seems the natural corollary of the confirmed incapacity and corruption of its administration.

The regret may be—nay, I believe is—as unfounded as the forecast is certainly doubtful. But the impression

which has been left on the public conscience will never be erased by ingenious apologies for massacre, nor by warnings of the weight which Turkey may yet exercise in the not improbable event of a disintegration of Austria-Hungary, by drawing her sword in the cause of one or other of the great military powers of the Continent. 'Fiat justicia ruat cœlum' is a sentiment which will outweigh even those prudential considerations which led the greatest of our ambassadors at Constantinople to emphasise the danger that would menace our rule in India were Russia once allowed to establish herself in the districts which command the passage to the Persian Gulf.

The crucial question, for the moment, is not whether we are justified in sacrificing a large Christian population to our own selfish interests, but whether the sacrifice of those interests will benefit those over whose welfare the signatories of the Berlin Treaty collectively pledged themselves to watch. Of the character and aim of Russia's policy in regard to Armenia there is no longer any room for doubt. It was described by Professor Ramsay at the recent Conference at Cardiff, in a speech rendered the more striking by his frank acknowledgment of the alteration which had taken place in his own views of the situation.

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'He confessed,' he said, 'that he had been entirely wrong when he urged some time ago that it would be possible to aim at co-operation with Russia in the peaceful solution of the Eastern question. It was impossible to resist the conviction that the conduct of the Russian Empire in this question in the East had been deliberately wrong and bad. Whereas two years ago he thought Great Britain seemed more guilty than any other country in the East, now he felt glad to be able to think that the burden of guilt no longer rested upon our shoulders but upon those of Russia. It was not possible to escape the conclusion that the Russian Empire deliberately aimed at getting Armenia without the Armenians. The Armenians were a difficult people to govern; and Russia, into whose hands in all probability the whole of the Armenian country was likely to drift, seemed to deliberately connive at the massacres of the Armenians, so as to get the country into their own hands with as small a proportion of the disaffected element as possible. He admitted that this was a grave and serious charge, but no other conclusion was possible.'

In a letter to the *Times* on the fifth of August last, I ventured to predict a recrudescence of outrage and violence in the neighbourhood of Lake Van, if no steps

were taken to prevent the unjustifiable coercion of Turkey by Russia into readmitting the Armenian exiles who had fled to the Caucasus during the recent disturbances. I pointed out that, with the best intentions in the world, the Government would find it a well-nigh impossible task, in a region over which they exercise a notoriously imperfect control, to protect a host of destitute immigrants and suspected revolutionaries from the vengeance of those Kurds who must be expelled from their new-found homes before the refugees could be reinstated in their place. Less than two months elapsed before that prediction was unhappily confirmed, on September 29th, by a telegram which reported a serious affray in the district of Alashgerd, in which some fifty Turks and fifteen Armenians, who had come from Russia, lost their lives. To what lengths reprisals so cunningly invited may again be pushed, if the indignation of the native population is aroused, no man can foretell. But the bitterest foes of Turkish rule will hardly accuse the Sultan of a desire to increase his existing difficulties by adding fuel to the fire, or suggest that, by allowing Russia to reap the fruits of so peculiarly heartless a policy, we should be acting in the interests of the Christians, to say nothing of our own. Be it remembered, that of those in the interior of Asiatic

Turkey who acknowledge the same faith as ourselves the Armenians form but a portion, considerable, it is true, but by no means the most deserving of our forethought; and that thousands belonging to the churches of the Nestorians and Jacobite Syrians, who have never associated themselves with conspiracy, and have consequently escaped unscathed through the horrors of the last few years, will assuredly not survive the overthrow of Ottoman power.

For myself, I have no desire to conceal my sympathy with the Turks. I have invariably met with the greatest kindness and courtesy at their hands. I believe that much of the abuse which has been hurled against them is exaggerated, ignorant, and prejudiced; and I would fain hope, even now, that a genuine and honest effort on their part to root out the most glaring evils in their system of government might render possible the re-establishment of that cordial understanding between England and Turkey, which can alone preserve her from ultimate absorption, and ourselves from inevitable collision with the greatest and most formidable of our rivals for Asiatic Empire.

WARKWORTH.

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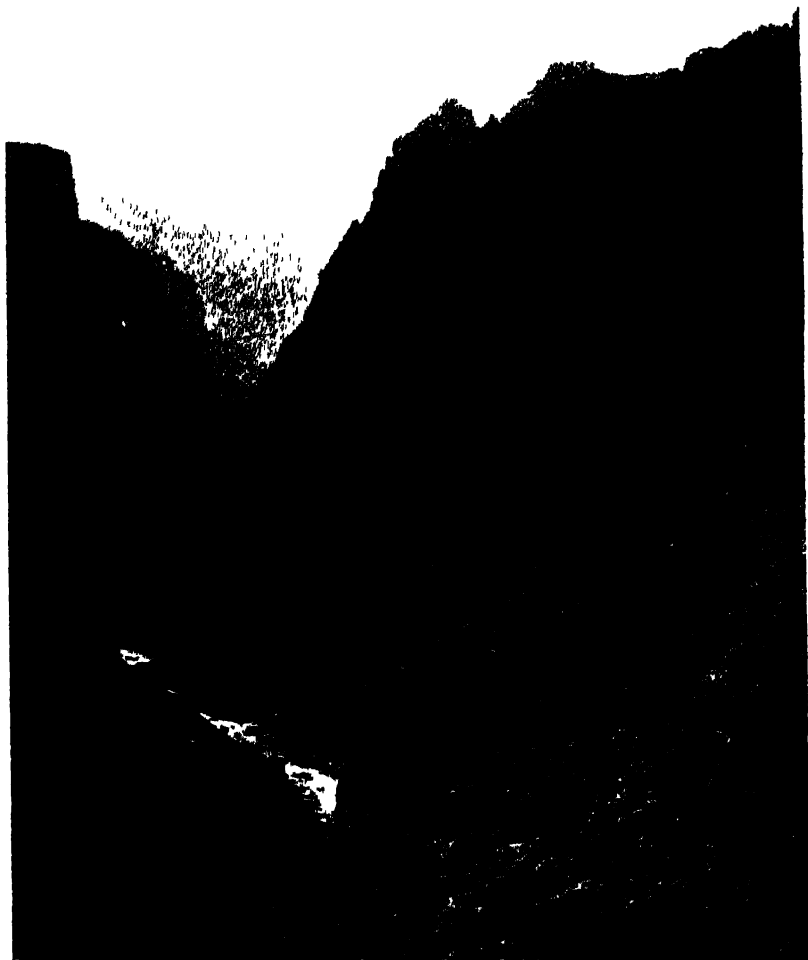
From a drawing by Sir John Stirling-Maxwell, Bart, M.P.

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MAP AT END OF VOLUME.

The designs upon the Cover are from a photograph of a
Caravan of Camels taken by Sir John Stirling-Maxwell,
and an impression of an early Babylonian Seal.





THE VALLEY OF THE ZAB.

NOTES FROM A DIARY IN ASIATIC TURKEY

CHAPTER I

FROM ANGORA TO SINGURLU

A DESOLATE expanse of sterile rock and plain, peopled by races still in a condition of semi-barbarism, and destined at no very distant epoch to fall a prey to the ambitious schemes of their European neighbours; a country in which travelling is sometimes dangerous, and always exasperatingly slow, with a maximum of discomfort and a minimum of compensating advantages—such is probably the general idea which many people have of Asiatic Turkey. And to some extent it is a true one. Comparatively few have ventured far beyond the coast fringe or have felt much desire to do so. There are no monuments to visit at all equal to the Pyramids and the Temples of the Pharaohs, and those who might ride ‘chapar’ over miles of desert in Persia to see the palace at Teheran or the ruins of Persepolis would think twice before they set out at a foot’s pace on a long and tedious pilgrimage

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to the patriarchal court at Kochanes or the crumbling mounds of Nineveh and Babylon. Yet, having enjoyed all these experiences, and visited almost every vilayet of Turkey between the Black Sea and the Gulf, I have no hesitation in saying, although I cannot quite analyse or explain the fascination, that to me it is the most interesting country in the world.

The cradle of the human race, the birthplace of that astounding history, or, as some will have it, of those legends

‘Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day’,

beneath its drifting sands lie buried the records of an antiquity more remote than even the explorers of Egypt have unveiled, records which have already revealed the existence of a civilisation in Babylonia separated by an interval of not less than six millenniums from our own. And to the ethnologist, the political student, or the lover of nature, no less than to the historian or the archæologist, is presented a field as varied, as complex, and as absorbing as he could hope to find in any quarter of the globe. He may enjoy the freehanded hospitality which makes the Turk, be he peasant or Pasha, the most charming of hosts; he may live among the tents of the wandering Turkomans, or learn from

the Bedoun the art of dismembering a roasted chicken with his fingers ; he may breathe the exhilarating air of the desert, or appreciate in the wild gorges of Kurdistan the comforts of the civilisation he has left, by sleeping in the subterranean stables where the villagers share their night's shelter with the horse and buffalo , or he may gather facts at first-hand which will make him realise, as no blue-books and no public meetings can, the condition of that Armenian people which has sunk from the position of rulers to that of serfs, the most persecuted, the most abject, and the most hopeless upon earth.

Only, the greatest patience and perseverance are required. When you are once within his doors the Turk does his utmost to make you feel at home, and appears genuinely aggrieved when you go. But he does not invite you—on the contrary, he tells you with the most provoking candour that he would rather not see you. If he must have Firenghi visitors he prefers that they should be Ingleez. He has seen more of them ; he does not understand them, but he likes them better than any other foreigners, and therefore, with characteristic inconsistency, he does his best to keep them away. The wildest and most transparent excuses are invented to deter them from coming. The country

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is so disturbed that he cannot guarantee their safety, so unhealthy that they would die of fever, so uninteresting that they would blame him for allowing them to waste their time in it. There is no use in arguing. Your only course is to go without telling him; and if you are lucky enough at the outset to escape his vigilance, he will eventually bow to his 'kismet' and treat you as an honoured guest whom he had desired all his life to entertain. But it is not always safe to generalise from a first experience, and, inferring from the facility with which on a previous journey I had obtained a 'buyuruldu' authorising me to cross from Baghdad to Damascus on my return from Persia, that I should find no insuperable difficulty in procuring another to visit Armenia, I again applied for a written sanction in 1897.

Before leaving London I heard that the Porte was exceedingly unwilling to grant the request, owing, no doubt, to the state of political unrest through which the Eastern provinces had recently passed, and the suspicions aroused by the part which England had played in regard to the massacres. No definite refusal had been given, but I was warned that if I came to Constantinople I might be delayed for some weeks, and after all be obliged to return without effect-

ing my object. In defiance of the advice given me by friends who had frequently travelled in the interior, and who thought the experiment a hopeless one, I determined to run the risk, and on my arrival called upon one of the most influential of the Ministers to ask him if he would use his influence in my favour. He gave me a most interesting sketch of Turkish history—he informed me that he had read the whole of Buckle's monumental work on the history of Civilisation, and he expressed considerable irritation at the interminable negotiations which compelled the Turkish Government to keep their victorious troops in Thessaly at an enormous cost to the exchequer after the war had already been decided in their favour. The only topic which was carefully avoided was that of my journey. At a second interview the same process was repeated, until I gently insinuated that, interesting as all history was, and especially that of the Ottoman Empire, my desire was to study its present conditions for myself, and as my time was unfortunately limited, I should like to have some definite information whether that desire was likely to be gratified or not. 'Malheureusement,' he replied, 'l'affaire est déjà bâclée.' He had interviewed the chamberlain at Yildiz, and had been told that my application was one which His

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Majesty could not possibly entertain. 'Nevertheless,' he added, 'if you and your friend, Mr. Holland, will confine your travels to a delightful cruise round the coasts of the Levant, I do not anticipate that any objection will be raised. I infinitely regret that you cannot go where you please; but what can we do? We know that you are our friends,—that you will not tell lies about us and our country—but if we give you permission we shall be obliged to give it to every one—even to our enemies.'

We thanked him for his courtesy and his kind suggestion of a less objectionable trip, and having packed up our things the same day, took the first steamer next morning to the opposite coast, and proceeded by train from Haidar Pasha to Angora. No one offered the slightest opposition, and the only inconvenience we suffered was the temporary loss of almost the whole of our luggage. This railway, although run by Europeans, is essentially Turkish.¹ It has the greatest

¹ Like so many of the important railways in Asia, the Ismidt-Angora line has fallen under German management; the shares are monopolised by the Deutsche Bank of Berlin, which heads the Syndicate of Concessionnaires; and the whole of the rolling-stock was made in Germany. The only line which remains in English hands is that between Smyrna and Aidin. That the German manufacturers are alive to the opportunity thus afforded them for pushing their trade, is evidenced by the number of commercial travellers who are constantly travelling to and fro between Angora and the coast. Mr Shipley, in his report for 1897, mentions that since his

objection to hurrying itself or to travelling by night. It deposits you half way at Eskishehr to sleep in a dirty Greek inn, and if it finds that your portmanteaux and boxes which it has taken on board at the start are inconveniently heavy, it quietly drops them at a wayside station and goes on without saying anything about it. So when we arrived at Angora, all our cartridges and most of our photographic plates were missing, and no one seemed to have the remotest idea where they were likely to be found. This compelled us to proceed without our dragoman, who stayed behind to make inquiries, and for the next ten days we had to shift as best we could with the somewhat elementary knowledge of the language which we had managed to scrape up.

The first half of the line, between Haidar Pasha and Eskishehr, takes you through charming scenery, winding for some distance along the indented shores of the Bay of Ismidt, and then climbing through thickly forested country where the little villages are

arrival a year and a half ago, 'only two representatives of British firms have visited Angora for purposes of business, and they were buyers, not sellers.' Consequently, although Great Britain still secures more than a third of the total import trade of the Angora district, and provides almost the whole of the cotton goods, 'German competition is rapidly making itself felt in woollen, silk, and mixed goods, the figures being in 1896—English, £23,800, as against £17,473 from Germany, in 1897—£27,000 against £26,000'

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picturesquely perched on the declivities of the hills. The last part runs over a desert plain, the tawny colour of the soil and the general configuration of the low hillocks reminding one of the sandy waste which lies between the great Lake of the Fayum and Cairo. The town of Angora is built up the sides of a rocky eminence at a height of about five hundred feet above the plain, and above it rise the ruins of the old castle. Nothing could be prettier than the effect of the white clustering houses as the traveller first sees them from the train, and few cities in Asiatic Turkey are so little disappointing on a nearer acquaintance. The narrow steep streets are thronged with specimens of many races, Kizilbash or Redheads from the neighbouring villages—a remnant probably of the aboriginal inhabitants, and popularly believed to possess neither religion nor respectable ideas of morality; Circassians from the Caucasus in long close-fitting tunics and wrought-silver belts of cartridges, retaining in their exile the thievish propensities which distinguished them in their old home, Tartars with the familiar Mongolian type of countenance, who are emigrants from Roumelia, and now invariably settle in the suburbs of the Anatolian villages, where they enjoy a practical monopoly of the carriers' trade, and lead a quiet and inoffensive existence; Turks in European



THE CASTLE, ANGORA

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costume and red fezzes; and Armenian priests in sable tunics, purple cloaks, and tall black birettas.

Angora rejoices also in a peculiar and famous breed of white cats, like those of Vau, only smaller, and in the more valuable 'mohair' goats, whose long white silky hair forms the principal staple of her commerce. There has unfortunately been a considerable falling off in the demand for this product of late, and if it had not been for the exceptionally good harvests of the last two years, which have enabled the people to export corn in large quantities,¹ they would have suffered far more than they have done. The political situation is not unsatisfactory. Although the Turks form the large majority of the population, the Vali—who is a soldier, an officer of Osman's at Plevna—has succeeded in maintaining strict order, and being a man of large and liberal ideas he might, if he had a freer hand, do much to improve the place.

When we called upon him in order to obtain a *tezkaré* to enable us to cross the border into the Sivas vilayet, we found him much bored at the prospect of the meeting of his council which was to take place that afternoon. He frankly deplored the absence of any

¹ The export of wheat in 1897 amounted to a value of £395,000, that of barley, of which England takes the principal share, to £46,500

railway communication between the country districts behind Angora, without which no real amelioration of the condition of the people could be effected, and complained of the system which absorbs all the provincial revenues into the exchequer, leaving nothing to be spent on local improvements. At the moment he was engaged in cleaning and repairing the famous Temple of Augustus, with a view to collecting all the antiquities in the neighbourhood and placing them there. At his invitation we paid a visit to the ruins, of which a considerable portion is still standing. A magnificent archway, surrounded by a frieze of delicate carving, leads into the court, from which at the opposite end a flight of steps is carried down to a tiny underground vault, supposed by some to have been used as a storehouse by the priests at the time when the temple was used as a Christian church. Built into the sides of the two walls of the court is the well-known Augustan inscription—the ‘Monumentum Ancyranum’—containing on one face the Latin text and on the other the Greek translation, in which the acts of the emperor are recorded. Many other fragmentary inscriptions are to be found in various parts of the town: four rudely carved marble lions of the Phrygian type, near the citadel, and on the outskirts a fine column said to have been erected

in honour of the Emperor Julian, which is now used by the storks as a perch for their nests. Along the north side of the castle cliff, which is a sheer precipice, flows the small stream, the Engurı Su, prettily shaded by a grove of poplars, and to the south-east you look from the old battlements across the great sweep of corn-land to the vine-covered slopes of the Elma Daglı.

No traveller who has merely stopped at Angora for the night has any suspicion of the beauty of the surrounding country. I shall never forget a walk which we took with Mr. Shipley, the Consul, one evening, about five miles from the town. The hillsides were clothed with dwarf oak, from the covert of which myriads of grasshoppers were filling the air with that peculiar ringing note to which their English cousins never attain, and with trailing vines laden with magnificent purple clusters. The rolling downs of dull yellow grass dip into countless ravines dotted with orchards, which produce the largest and rosiest apples ever seen out of England, whence they were probably imported by the merchants of the Levant Company two centuries ago. And as the sun dips below the horizon the distant hills take on those extraordinary tints of purple and rose which can hardly be even imagined by those who have never visited the East.

On leaving Angora, accompanied by an Albanian kavass whom the Consul had kindly lent to us—an excellent fellow, but ignorant of all but half a dozen words of English—our road lay south-east over an extensive plain exhibiting scarcely any signs of human habitation, except the scattered black tents of the nomad Turkoman tribes. We stopped to take our lunch with them one day, and found them shy, but perfectly friendly. At first they were a little suspicious of the camera, which they evidently regarded as an instrument of the Black Art, but were easily reassured by the gift of a few cigarettes, and entered with zest into our proposal that they should occupy themselves in giving us a lesson on the correct pronunciation of their language. We passed several of these encampments in the course of the next few days, and the men would come running out, of their own accord, to offer us bunches of grapes, slices of water-melon, or large bowls of buffalo's milk.

At Assi Yuzgat, a tumble-down place built on the slopes of a bleak gully, there is a curious hexagonal altar carved with grape clusters, a rudely sculptured lion of the same type as those at Angora, and a small Greek inscription so defaced as to be illegible, which has been built upside down into the wall of a drinking-trough. This seems to be a common practice in these

parts, for I discovered another in a similar position at Salman Keui, between Singurlu and Boghaz Keui. In the same village we were shown one in the wall of a private house; and several more, exhibiting rude crosses, are scattered over the surface of the mounds in the neighbourhood. Continuing our journey over the same deserted country by an appallingly bad road, we put up for the night in a fertile valley at Kilijilar. The inhabitants are mostly Kizilbash, but one sees instances among them of a facial type so uncommonly fair, that it is not unreasonable to suppose that they represent the survival of an old infusion of Gallic blood. The headman of the village entertained us most hospitably in his house, a small wooden erection overlooking the street, with a verandah thickly curtained by a trellis of vines. The only drawback—and it is one which the traveller must put up with in Asia Minor—was that our hosts investigated every article we possessed with indefatigable curiosity, watched every mouthful we ate as though we were animals in a menagerie, and when all the subjects of conversation—even the inexplicable properties of a trout rod—were exhausted, sat on in dead silence, only interrupted at intervals by renewed exclamations of wonder.

Next morning we had to cross a high ridge by a

path so execrable that our wagon was more than once within an ace of being overturned, and our only zaptieh, who rode ahead on a seedy charger, sat muffled up in a sleeveless jacket of undressed sheepskin, shivering in spite of the intense heat with a violent ague. We forded the Halys, the Kızıl Irmak, at midday, and at nightfall reached Karabekir, where a local magnate received us in a large divan in the upper story of his house. To an abnormally unprepossessing appearance he added the disfigurement of a missing eye, and sat ogling us in the company of six morose-looking friends, asking many questions, between frequent pinches from his snuffbox, about the progress of the war, and expressing his delight at the result by gleefully drawing his hand with a see-saw motion across his throat. They would probably have talked till daylight before they had satisfied their curiosity, had we not intimated that a few hours' sleep would be acceptable, when they left us in possession of the guest-room, and retired to slumber on the roof.

The undulating tract of country through which we drove next day was full of people winnowing and threshing corn. The grain, which is stacked in great pyramids, is beaten out by means of a flat wooden board tilted up at one end like a toboggan, on which a woman or child sits, to drive the oxen or buffaloes attached to it

in endless circles round the broad mud floors. This device is not confined to Turkey, and I have seen Armenian women threshing in precisely the same way at Gori and other places in the Caucasus. As we were driving down the slopes behind Singurlu the pole of our crazy araba suddenly snapped, and the horses bolting off the road were only brought up after a mad gallop of ten minutes, by a sudden rise in the ground. Passing the long succession of orchards that line the approach to the town, we deposited our baggage at a large, dirty khan, the courtyard of which was immediately filled by a ragged and inquisitive crowd, and proceeded with our letter of recommendation from Angora to the Kaimakam's house. It fronts the principal square, the opposite side of which is occupied by the barracks, and we found the governor seated at a table surrounded by his medjliss and his servants, preparatory to selling the tithes of the surrounding villages. These are put up to auction by the Government and knocked down to the highest bidder, often a member of the Council, who has privately settled the matter beforehand with his colleagues. The former offers either less than what the legalised tax of one in eight¹ will realise, and appropriates the difference,

¹ Before the year 1897 the legalised tax was one in 8½. The tithe is levied on the whole produce of the soil, including honey and timber.

or else he offers more, and recoups himself by exactions upon the peasantry. In some cases the Kurdish aghas have actually taken as much as half the total produce of the harvest in this way. The whole year's crop is collected together, and when the farmer makes his round it is divided into eight separate heaps, one of which forms the recognised share of the Government. This system, besides affording the opportunity for extortion just described, is liable to the additional abuse, that as none of the corn can be touched until after the collector has paid his visit, a threat to defer his coming until the grain has begun to rot is a very simple method of extorting blackmail for himself.

Five years ago, in the neighbourhood of Diarbekir, an instructive and amusing instance occurred of the gross imposition to which this system of tithe-farming readily lends itself. The Vali sent an agent to collect from a village which up to that time had paid only 900 piastres—a sum obviously less than its fair amount. He gave him to understand that a larger contribution must be obtained for the current year, and accordingly, when the books were sent in, a sum of 9000 piastres was duly entered among the receipts. Instead of being pleased at this literal compliance with his directions, the Vali asserted that the accounts must be wrong, and when the

astonished agent emphatically denied the accusation, he threw him into prison. After a few hours' meditation in the privacy of his cell, the prisoner realised what was expected of him, and sent to the Vali to say that he much regretted having overlooked a slight error in the figures. He had stated, by some strange aberration of mind, that he had received 9000 piastres, whereas, of course, he had in fact only received 900. He was promptly set at liberty; the Government received its old inadequate contribution of 900, and the Vali pocketed 8000, giving the marginal 100 to his intelligent subordinate.

The Kaimakam received us with open arms, insisted on our shifting our quarters to the serai, and despatched one of his Levantine officials to show us the town. There was little to see except a fine panorama from the hill at the back. Large crops of corn, opium, cotton, and grapes are grown in the district, but they are of little value to the inhabitants, as there can be no outlet for the trade until, if ever, the railway is prolonged from Angora in this direction, instead of going direct *via* Yuzgat. By the terms of their concession, the Germans are under an obligation to extend the line to Sivas, as soon as the receipts on the Haidar Pasha-Angora section reach a total of £960 per mile during three consecutive years,

and in the event of the receipts from the lines already undertaken sufficing to free the Government from liability on account of the guarantee, they are to prolong it from Sivas to Diarbekır and Baghdad.¹ I was informed by a Vali in Armenia that the Government are anxious, no doubt from strategical reasons, to connect the railway with Erzingian, and their idea may be to effect its junction at Diarbekır with the branch line from Angora to Kaisariyeh, running *viâ* Marash to Biredjik, so as to meet the Damascus-Homs-Aleppo extension from the South. Such a line, however, would probably prove less remunerative to the promoters, and certainly less advantageous to the trade of the interior, than one which aimed at tapping the rich grain districts between Angora and the Black Sea ports. At present there is no market at all for the produce of these districts, the price of which is more than doubled by the high rates for transport. Unfortunately the guarantee system, which imposes an intolerable burden on the Treasury,² actually discourages

¹ Major Law's Report on Railways in Asiatic Turkey, 1895

² Major Law estimates the total liabilities of the Government, on account of railway guarantees in Asia, at £1,373,557. The effect of the railway in the development of the agricultural resources of the districts through which it passes, is strikingly illustrated by the figures which he gives of the rapid rise in the value of the tithes, assigned for the liquidation of the guarantee, and administered by the Commission of Public Debt, from £T141,482 in 1889 to £T209,625 in 1893.

the company from seeking to improve their traffic returns, since the larger these become, the greater the amount that must be deducted from the £960 per mile which the Government ensures to them.

No disturbance took place at Singurlu during the time of the massacres, though the natives had talked about it, and had even gone the length of assigning to one another, in advance, the wives of their prospective victims. The Kaimakam, however, put his foot down firmly, and gave out that strong measures would be taken against any one who began a riot.

Had every governor in the provinces chosen to exert his authority in a similar manner, there would have been very little disorder. But it is probable that in several cases the less bigoted officials were purposely kept in ignorance of what was about to occur, and that others who were likely to prove themselves more pliable instruments were alone admitted to a share in the secret. If the story be true which is told of Edhem Pasha, the hero of the recent war in Thessaly, when quartered at Aleppo, it is a striking example of what might have been effected in most places by the resolute and timely intervention of the authorities. Rumours, it is said, having reached his ears that a plot was being formed for a general massacre, he

instantly made his way to the principal mosque, and opening the Koran in the presence of the assembled crowd, demanded if any one could point to a single text in it which would justify the perpetration of an act such as that which was contemplated; then, receiving no response, he added, 'I will turn my own guns upon the first man who lifts his hand against the Christians.'

CHAPTER II

BOGHAZ KEUI TO EUYUK

OUR departure next morning was witnessed by the governor's family, the Greek doctor, and the population *en masse*. The rolling plain from Singurlu right up to Boghaz Keui is covered with fields of wheat and hemp, with here and there a small thriving-looking village. On reaching our destination we were welcomed by Zia Bey, a very wealthy landlord and a descendant of the old Sultans of Marash and Albistan. About thirty years of age, but quite ten years younger in appearance, his most peculiar characteristic was an unusually long wisp of thin and well-oiled hair, which in moments of perplexity or excitement would escape from his fez and trail over one eye. Being the happy possessor of four wives, besides the usual complement of irregulars, the subject which excited his unbounded astonishment, and to which he recurred most often in the necessarily restricted area of our conversation, was the unaccountable celibacy of his visitors. Never have I met any one so unwearying in his attentions to

guests whom he must have regarded as maniacs, since we had come with no companions but Turks, and though we waited some days, our interpreter never turned up. The day began very early, for the household was always astir at sunrise, and our host paid his first visit at an hour which barely left us time to wash and dress and eat our breakfast. We were generally devouring the latter meal when he made his appearance, dressed in a long black frock-coat, very loose trousers with broad stripes, and a gaudy flowered waistcoat, and accompanied by all the male servants of the establishment, any zaptieh who might happen to be passing, and any villager who could devise no more idle way in which to pass his morning. After a preliminary handshake, we all resumed our seats on the divan, and again saluted each other in the customary fashion, by carrying the hand from the knee to the lips and forehead. He would then inquire after our health, we would make some observation about the weather, and he would express regret that our 'tergiman' had not arrived. As it very often rained during the period of our stay, these last two remarks were indulged in so frequently that they became merged in a kind of dismal refrain.

'Khair! Buyuroon!' he would ejaculate on entering

the room; adding, with a deep and pathetic sigh, 'Yaghmur choq—Tergıman yok. Fena. Fena.'¹

Luncheon he generally partook of in our company. There were never less than fifteen dishes of delicious but very oily delicacies,—a brimming bowl of 'chorba,' or vegetable soup, kebobs of meat roasted on spits; dolmas of minced mutton or pilaf, rolled in quince leaves and swimming in gravy—and as it was expected that we should partake of every one, some nice calculation was necessary if we wished to avoid what Lord Rosebery has gracefully termed a very thorough sense of repletion. Our companion, following the usual custom among the Turks, never drank any water until the repast was over; and on Fridays, being a very strict Mohammedan, observed a scrupulous fast. If we went out to explore the ruins on the surrounding hillsides, he invariably accompanied us, partly from a burning desire to verify his belief that we were searching for hidden gold, and partly because he would have considered it a breach of courtesy to leave us to our own devices. The thing that pained him most, and which he never could comprehend, was our predilection for pedestrian exercise; and when, in spite of our protests, he insisted one afternoon on sharing our

¹ 'Good morning Be seated! Much rain—no dragoman. Bad! bad!'

walk of about two miles, his exhaustion was such that in future he would allow us to start alone, and learning the direction we had taken from his servants, would follow on horseback, on the plea that in no other way could he possibly have overtaken us. He would ask us every question under the sun - from the history of the Royal Family to the views of the English on matrimony; whether England was smaller than London, and which belonged to France; how much bigger the Turkish fleet was than the combined armaments of England, France, and Russia, and what was the fashionable costume of ladies at home. We drew elaborate maps of the world for his benefit, on paper six inches by eight, and the most artistic and faithful portraits of trains, steamers, and hansom cabs. We described the size of national fleets and armies, and struggled to make him understand how the continent of America could be peopled by an English-speaking race, one-half of which did not belong to England, and had no king of their own. And I think I may say with perfect confidence that, after gravely discussing our statements with his servants and neighbours, he disbelieved them all with equal impartiality.

Once we induced him to teach us a Turkish card

game, for he utterly failed to grasp the science of picquet, and we found it much easier to understand him than to explain ourselves. But 'the rules of that game were peculiar.' To begin with, the system of counting was most bewildering. The knave counted two, the queen three, the king four, the ace eleven, deuce thirteen, tierce thirty-one, and the rest nothing! We played pretty often, but the result was always the same. Our host invariably won, and to this day I do not fathom the principle which compelled us always to follow lead, while it permitted our antagonist to play any card he pleased. His favourite occupation was to superintend and direct operations on the threshing floors, which were overlooked by the windows, and he would often stand at them for hours, shouting his orders at the top of his voice to the distracted peasants below. On one occasion we returned from a walk among the ruins to take shelter from one of the violent storms of wind and thunder-rain, which would spring up without a moment's warning, and found him vainly struggling to make himself heard across the din of the hurricane, while the air grew dense with whirling clouds of chaff, and the tiles of his roof descended precipitately with a clash into the courtyard beneath.

Boghaz Keui—'the village of the defile'—now

generally identified with the ancient 'Pteria,' is picturesquely situated on either side of the Yazir Deresi, near the juncture of two deep glens. The old capital, according to Professor Ramsay,¹ was connected even before 500 B.C. with the western seaboard, on the one hand, by the Royal Road that crossed the Halys by a bridge and ran through Pessinus to Ephesus and Sardis, and, on the other, with the east and north by the highway along which the products of Cappadocia were carried from the Cilician gates to Sinope. But if its position renders it probable that it was at the dawn of history a place of great commercial importance, the remains of its buildings and fortifications afford indisputable evidence that it was also a royal residence, and a striking type of those 'fenced cities' in which the early opponents of Israel after the Exodus would baffle the pursuit of their victorious foes.

Just across the stream and above the threshing floors on the east bank are the ruins of an old 'Hittite' palace, of which nothing can now be seen except the ground plan, indicated by an almost perfect rectangle of massive limestone blocks. The surface of some of them is pierced by small round holes, which Perrot conjectures to have been origin-

¹ *Historical Geography of Asia Minor.*

ally filled with mortar or wooden pegs connecting the sub-structure with the upper layer of bricks. In support of this view, he argues with great plausibility that if stone had been used for the walls, it could hardly have disappeared so completely as to leave the ground entirely unencumbered with *débris*, while he points to the two rudely fashioned lions which lie near as a sufficient refutation of the theory that the building was interrupted by invasion and consequently never completed. The central court is approached by three doors at the south end, and surrounded on all sides by small chambers, while there are traces of other structures on a platform a few feet below.

From the steep brush-covered slopes behind rise a number of curious limestone cliffs, which have been artificially scarped and prepared for purposes of defence. An isolated one a little to the east—the Nishan Tash—has a large slanting slab of rock eighteen feet high, inscribed with hieroglyphs in low relief, but so much weathered that only a few characters can be traced. At its foot lies a great stone cut in the form of a sarcophagus. Two other cliffs, a little to the south-west, which apparently served as redoubts to the acropolis, have strongly fortified summits approached by a flight of lofty steps, with the remains of a wall on one side,

and a couple of deep rock-hewn cisterns in the enclosures. A much smaller crag—the Kizlar Kaya—on the outskirts of the village, has a perfectly level platform on the top, and what must once have been an admirably cut staircase, at which Zia Bey rode his mare in order to display her powers of jumping, but only succeeded in bringing her down and cutting her knees on the smooth slippery incline. The acropolis itself was built on the highest point at the southern extremity, protected on one side by a precipice and on the other three by a solid block of masonry formed of enormous hewn boulders. Here again two deep wells have been sunk, and the whole area is littered with fragments of hard red brick and pottery, a few of which are covered with cuneiform characters, dating probably from between 1500 and 1200 B.C., and written in the same style as the Tell el-Amarna tablets in Egypt. I tried to procure one uninjured specimen, but without success, for although the villagers are constantly finding small broken pieces, they do not attempt to penetrate below the surface, and the heavy rains and severe winters of Cappadocia effectually destroy all that remains exposed to the air.

Behind the acropolis runs a circle of wall several miles in extent, composed of a framework of large stones enclosing a loose pile of smaller ones. Almost

impracticable as an attack from the east must in any case have been owing to the abrupt drop of the Beyuk Kayanin Daresi ravine, a broad trench is carried along the whole front of the wall, and in addition to this precaution the hillside has been perforated by at least one, and possibly by several, subterranean passages, which might have served equally for a retreat in case of need, or for a sudden sortie of the garrison. The only one which we explored is between two and three hundred yards long, built of large unhewn boulders and entered by a narrow aperture with a pointed arch, something similar, as Perrot observes, to the entrances of the royal tombs at Mycenæ. Although the fallen *débris* has choked up a considerable portion of the gallery, we succeeded in passing from one end to the other, accompanied on all fours by our host, who had never discovered its existence before, and thought that now, at any rate, he would come upon the treasure for which he fondly imagined we were looking. Not far from the western exit are the ruins of another building, where I picked up some thin bits of limestone, so highly polished as to be almost like marble, which may have formed part of the original flooring. The most striking engineering feat has been accomplished on the west side of the stream, where a tunnel with wonderfully

smooth walls has been pierced for about a hundred yards in the solid face of the cliff. The fact that it stops abruptly seems to show that it was used as a granary or storehouse of some kind, rather than as a passage. Small cavities have been similarly hollowed out in a rock below Zia's house, and in another between the palace and the stream.

Numerous gateways occur at intervals along the walled rampart to the south, and the principal one is carefully described by Perrot¹. The illustration, however, which he borrows from Texier, shows a curious error, which we discovered by the merest accident. We had set out, accompanied for once only by one of the servants, and after exploring the various sites we knew of, we asked him whether there was really nothing more to be seen. He reflected a moment, and then replied that there was one object which he called a 'madam' (a lady), and that if we liked he would show us the way. On second thoughts he relapsed into a very mysterious mood and said that he would rather not do so. He would vouchsafe no reason, but squatted resolutely on the hillside and refused to budge. It was getting dark and he was obviously oppressed by superstitious fears, so we left him alone and set off to find

. ¹ *Histoire de l'Art dans l'Antiquité*, vol. iv. p. 619

the creature, whatever it might be, for ourselves. Seeing that we were resolved, he presently rejoined us and conducted us to a gap in the wall overlooking the ravine, flanked on each side by a tall monolith. According to Perrot, two lion heads project from these posts just under a massive stone which serves as a lintel, but at first we could not make out any sculpture, and the gateway had no covering at all. On a closer inspection we discovered, not the head, but the colossal body of a lion, half-buried in the ground. It was utterly unlike the smaller sculptures in the palace, and a single glance was sufficient to show that its design was analogous to that of the great winged figures which the Assyrians and Persians placed at the entrance of their audience-halls. But the execution of the work was very different and inferior in kind. The mane was merely indicated by a number of conventional curved lines, and the body exhibited rather the rough and rounded outline of the lions that guard the door of the Phrygian rock sepulchres than the muscular characteristics of those at Nineveh and Persepolis. The monster was embedded up to its knees in the earth, so that it was impossible to examine the feet; but the most remarkable and unique feature that distinguishes it from any sculptures of the kind that I have seen, is that behind each of the fore legs

are carved the breasts of a woman. The head had been sadly mutilated, and all the fore part and the features broken off. Recognising the apparent similarity of the sculpture to those I have referred to, we inferred that it probably had a counterpart on the other side, but we could not verify this, as the corresponding monolith was buried in a mass of stone and gravel, which it would have required a pickaxe to dislodge. The opposite entrance on the west is no doubt identical in character, if one may judge from the rocks which project from the ground in a line with the others, and probably mark the tops of the two side posts.

On our return to the village we tried to induce our host to allow us to take some men up in the morning and clear away the accumulation of earth, that we might obtain a better view of that one of the lions at least which was already partially uncovered. At first he appeared very willing to give us all the assistance in his power; but after a prolonged and heated debate with his neighbours during the evening he changed his mind—partly, I think, from an unwillingness to embark upon excavations without permission from the authorities at Constantinople, and partly from a reflection that if the investigation was to be made he could do it quite as well himself after our departure.



CENTRAL FIGURES IN THE PROCESSION, LARGE GALLERY, VASILIKAYA

Interesting as are the ruins just described, from the evidence they display of the elaborate precautions taken by the defenders of this ancient Hittite capital, and of the mechanical skill which they possessed, by far the most attractive to the average traveller are the famous rock sculptures situated on the hillside at a distance of little more than a mile to the west of the village. They are carved upon the interior facings of a group of limestone cliffs, forming two distinct galleries side by side, the larger about ninety feet long and gradually narrowing from forty at the entrance to fifteen at the end, the smaller only forty-two by nine. A connecting passage, bored through the intervening rock, is now almost blocked up and contains no carvings. The figures in the main gallery are carried round all three walls, those on the left representing a procession of men dressed for the most part in short tunics, with high conical hats and shoes with upturned toes; those on the right a line of women in long robes and round tiaras. Between these two converging lines is grouped a series of larger figures symbolising various deities. Two gods stand upon cleft mountain peaks behind a taller one, whose feet rest on the bowed necks of a couple of priests, while a goat wearing the same pointed cap leaps up behind him. Facing this central figure,

and also accompanied by a goat, is a goddess, robed like her attendant women and supported by an animal resembling a panther. In her train follows a man with a double-headed battle-axe, upon a similar steed, and two priestesses treading on the tips of the outstretched wings of a double-headed eagle.¹ The only other sculpture in this gallery is one which stands on a rock by itself, immediately to the right of the entrance. It represents a colossal beardless figure standing on two points like fire-cones, wearing a long flowing dress and skull cap, and carrying a wand in his hand with a circular curve at the extremity. Over his head are a few hieroglyphs and the winged solar disk.

It is a fact worthy of remark that whereas in the two other instances in which this figure appears he is represented as inferior in stature to any of the companion deities, here only, where he stands alone, is he depicted on a gigantic scale. On the left wall he follows in the rear of a man who wears upon his head a triple helmet, and, as before, his identity is established by the symbol of the winged circle above his cap. We

¹ This curious heraldic device, which reappears in the sculptures of Euyuk, was borrowed by the Turkoman emirs and brought to Europe by the Crusaders in the fourteenth century (Sayce, *The Hittites*, p 86). It is carved in high relief on the side of the Great Gate of the Chifte Minaret at Erzerum—a Seljuk building of the twelfth century.



SACERDOTAL FIGURE AT YASILI KAYA

meet him once more in the small gallery, dressed in precisely the same way, and indicated by the same mystical sign, his neck circled by the left arm of a taller figure clothed to the waist in a close-fitting tunic, with greaved legs and a high peaked bonnet. He seems to be advancing with outstretched arms towards a monstrous shape, half-beast, half-human, which wears the same head-dress and round ear-rings in its enormous ears, while from each shoulder project the head and fore-paws of a lion, and two others, full size, hang head downwards from the hips upon a rude column in which the idol terminates. Along the opposite wall marches a column of soldiers or reapers, carrying broad curved blades over their shoulders. On both sides of this gallery two deep niches have been cut, perhaps, as Perrot suggests, to hold the sacred vessels connected with the cult, indicating that this was the *sanctum sanctorum* in which the priests officiated, while the larger gallery corresponded to the pronaos of the Greek temple, to which the general body of the worshippers were admitted. In support of this supposition he points to the more abstruse symbolism displayed by the monstrous shape in the 'naos,' and to two small dog and lion-headed figures at the entrance of the passage, which may have been intended as mystic types to remind

the people of the peculiar sanctity of the inner shrine. The conjecture, it must be confessed, is more ingenious than plausible. Whatever may have been the purpose of the passage, it is certainly not the obvious means of communication with the smaller gallery, which—so far from being specially difficult of access—is open at both ends, in contrast to the larger, which has only a single entrance. The gaps may have been artificially closed, but of this there is not the slightest evidence in the rough and irregular outline of the cliff-edges.

Although the sculptures are in many respects not unlike the Assyrian, they yet have a character of their own which is quite unmistakable. The large oblique eyes, slanting foreheads, and high cheekbones belong to the Mongolian type, which at the present day reappears in the Turk. The tall conical hats and long plaited hair might be copied from the present Nestorian inhabitant of Tiari; the curious shoes with the broad toes curving upwards are still worn by the peasantry of Anatolia. But it must be confessed that scarcely sufficient data as yet exist from which to construct a definite theory, either as to the purpose of these galleries, the history and religion of those who carved them, or the meaning of the scenes which they depict.

They may have been 'high places' surrounded by groves, approaches to tombs as yet undiscovered, or merely, like the rock panels at Nakshi Rستم in Persia, a convenient vehicle for perpetuating the memory of the exploits of some king. According to Texier, they embody a record of the worship of Anartis by the Median followers of Cyaxares; Barth sees in them a monument of the treaty signed between that monarch and the Lydian Alyattes after the famous eclipse mentioned by Herodotus in 584 B.C. (the principal figures on this hypothesis representing Astyages and his bride¹); while Perrot, Ramsay, and Sayce agree in recognising them as portrayals of the worship of Cybele and Attys (Ishtar and Tammuz), not by the Medes but by the Leuco-Syrian population of Pteria. If this view be accepted, the chief female divinity, the Great Mother worshipped under various names in every part of the continent, was the central object of veneration, and the bearded god who confronts her in the long procession, and whose name Sayce² reads as Tar or Tarku (a king) and identifies with the Zeus of Lucian and the Baal Sandan of Lydia and Cilicia, is 'admitted by treaty or marriage to share

¹ Aryenis, daughter of Alyattes and sister of Croesus (Herodotus, A § 72.)

² Sayce, *The Hittites*.

the honours paid to her.' ¹ The personage in the skull cap who appears three times in the two galleries is the eunuch priest holding the lituus, and the deity who attends the Mother carrying a battle-axe, or embracing the priest, is her son. The Therion, half-beast, half-human, may represent, as Perrot and Hogarth agree in thinking, the head of the son and the lions of his mother—an esoteric rendering of the essential unity of the reproductive forces of nature.

But there is, in my humble opinion, one great difficulty in the way of accepting this explanation. It is scarcely probable, if the figure with the lituus were nothing more than a priest, that he should be the only one specially designated by the emblem of royalty or divinity.² He can hardly be the son, if Attys is also

¹ The pre-eminence of the Great Mother in the Hittite theogony was apparently enjoyed by the God Sutekh during the time of Rameses II, and some have seen in the preference shown by Khuenaten (Amenophis IV) for the worship of Atonu, the sundisk, an evidence of the influence of his Syrian wife and an attempt to revive the cult of Sutkhu introduced into Egypt by the Hittite Hyksos.

² This difficulty is not removed by the alternative suggestion of Perrot that the bearded god in the great gallery is the same as the son in the smaller, an allusion to his legendary dual character, first of husband and then of eunuch priest, to his mother. The two figures embracing one another might well represent the divine high priest and his subordinate, for this would fit in with the description given by Lucian of the worship in the Temple of Mabog, where he states that the high priest alone wore the

represented by the figure with the battle-axe, for they appear together in the smaller gallery—a fact which seems to have been overlooked by Mr. Hogarth in his suggested interpretation¹ Possibly, as he submits, no more recondite meaning is to be attached to these sculptures than that of a meeting between the goddess and a monarch of Pteria, who dedicates himself and his people to her service after a successful war, while the twelve reapers in the small court march with their sickles to gather in the fruits of the earth under her protection. But the presence of winged figures, and of the royal or divine personage in the king's retinue, seems to bear against this simple interpretation.

Analogies are always dangerous, and until we have more precise information about the religion of the Hittites, and know how close was its relation to the primitive legends of Chaldæa, it is not of much use to hazard conjectures. But assuming a common origin and a general correspondence between the two, it is perhaps not an extravagant guess that we have in these

peaked tiara, while the inferior ministers wore the skull cap (Sayce) At Pessinus the high priest of Cybele himself bore the official title of Attys (Perrot, vol iv p 651 note) But this explanation is hardly consistent with the fact that the winged disk is never associated with the high priest but always with his subordinate.

¹ Murray's *Handbook*

pictures an embodiment of the universal sun-myth. The Goddess of Earth, the Nana or Ishtar of the Sumerians, attended by the king of Pteria (?) and her handmaids, comes forward to meet Anu the God of Heaven, who brings in his train their child Tammuz, or Dumuzi, the sun, after his long winter sojourn in Hades. Before him two figures bear pitchers containing the precious life-giving water from the spring¹ with which Ishtar has already been revived, and in which she must bathe her son-spouse every year.² Conder³ may be right in identifying the two monstrous figures in the same hall, at the entrance to the passage, with Nergal the God of the Infernal regions; and the colossal figure in the smaller gallery recalls in one respect, at least, the characteristics of Beltis Allat his queen, with her two lion children hanging to her breasts.

Our frequent visits to these 'written' rocks rather mystified Zia, who was our constant companion, and asked innumerable questions about them. I never could induce him to believe that they had been carved by mortals, and that the interest which Europeans took

¹ On a cylinder in the Louvre representing Tammuz seated upon Ishtar's knees, a number of similarly shaped water-jars are depicted.

² Maspero, *Dawn of Civilisation*, pp. 691, 696.

³ Conder, *The Hittites and their Language*, 117-18.

in them was merely an archæological one. He would shake his head solemnly and inform me that they were certainly the work of 'jins,' and that it was in the hope of discovering the whereabouts of the hidden deposits of gold and treasure that the Firenghis came to study the hieroglyphs. Once, however, a brilliant alternative solution flashed upon him, and turning to one of his servants, he remarked that perhaps after all these galleries were a form of Christian Church and that we came to worship the idols.

It was impossible to stay any longer at Boghaz Keui, for we had to time ourselves to catch the steamer at Samsun; and, as no riding horses could be procured, we were obliged to return to Singurlu, where a Greek kindly offered us his house for the night. While we were breakfasting next morning, suddenly a loud sound of wailing arose outside, which he explained by informing us that his uncle had that moment expired in the adjacent building, and that he must go to the assistance of the mourners. Through the window we could see a continuous stream of people entering the house of the deceased, and coming outside at intervals to beat their breasts and give vent to piercing exclamations of grief. We tore ourselves from this heartrending spectacle to pay a visit to our old friend, the Kaimakam,

whom we found, as before, seated in patriarchal fashion on the verandah, surrounded by his servants and the members of his family. We represented to him that we could wait no longer for our dragoman, who was obviously lost, stolen, or strayed, and that all our efforts to procure either riding horses or a wagon in the town had resulted in failure. He replied that if we would take our luncheon with him, he would send a zaptich to hunt for an araba. The messenger, however, returned with the information that there were only three such conveyances to be found, and every one of them had already been secured by the merchants to carry their corn to Angora. The sequel was eminently characteristic of Turkish methods. The owner of one of the carts was persuaded to break his engagement and to give up his vehicle to us. Accordingly it arrived soon after at the door of the konak, but without its driver, who had hidden himself at the last moment for fear of the consequences. A second hunt ensued for some one to drive the stolen araba, and it was not till late in the afternoon that we started on our jolting journey on the hard bottom of a four-wheeled, springless cart, under the shade of a gigantic awning stretched upon a crazy wooden framework, with a diminutive Tartar boy seated in front as coachman.

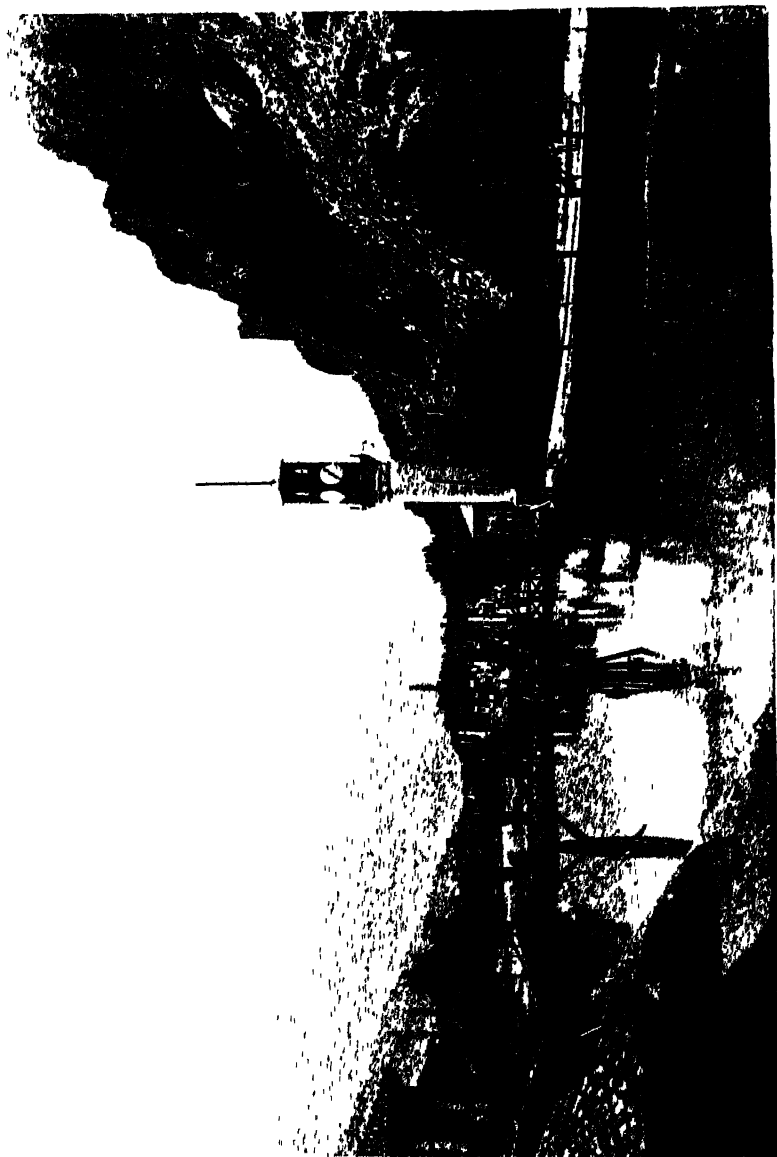
As there was no moon, a long stage was out of the question, and soon after sunset we put up in a small mud hovel partly scooped out of the hillside, and were ushered into the only room—a long low barn in which all the cattle, poultry, and horses were stabled. Here we squatted down on a strip of felt by the fire and joined the excessively dirty family of peasants in their sumptuous repast of pilaf, yaourt, and chicken, tearing the meat with our fingers or receiving a tit-bit from the grimy paws of the *paterfamilias*, and dipping our spoons into the soup-bowl and the other dishes in any order we pleased. It cannot honestly be said that the night's experience was one of unmitigated pleasure, for the atmosphere was heavy with the warm reek of the cattle, and sleep was effectually 'frighted' away by the groans of the little Tartar, who scratched himself continuously, and the snores of the zaptieh, who reposed outside in the araba

CHAPTER III

EUYUK TO JEVIZLIK

AFTER an hour and a half's drive next morning we reached the tiny and squalid hamlet of Euyuk, raised on a long high mound at the edge of the plain. Behind it rises the curious conical hill of Karahissar, its base littered with the extensive ruins of an old Turkish town. The inhabitants of Euyuk are for the most part Kizilbash and very inquisitive. Indeed, the throng that accompanied us to the monuments and insisted on perpetually getting in our way and offering inane explanations of their meaning, made it difficult to examine them with any degree of comfort. It was unfortunate that, having by this time exhausted all my plates, I was unable to take any photographs, which I regretted the more since the so-called 'sphinxes,' rough-hewn in basalt, are perhaps the most curious and unique in style of all the known 'Hittite' remains. They stand on either side of the southern gateway of the palace, the holes for the hinges being still visible, and on the inner flank of one of them, holding a hare in its claws and bearing a human figure

AMASIA



on its back, is a double-headed eagle. Like the human-headed bulls of Nineveh, and unlike the sphinxes of Egypt, they stand upright, but the curved lappets of the head-dress that fall upon their shoulders are almost identical with those worn by the Egyptian Hathor. To the right and left lie a series of large slabs carved in relief, but many have been so much injured that it is scarcely possible to tell what they represented. The general plan seems to have been that of two religious processions. In the first a number of figures, headed by a man wearing a skull cap and carrying the lituus, as at Boghaz Keui, approach with sacrificial animals and musical instruments to the foot of a pedestal, on which stands a bull with branching horns. In the second the same priestly figure, similarly attended, pours a libation upon the feet of a female figure draped in a long robe and seated on a throne. The bull has been supposed by some to be a local representation of the Son of the Great Mother; but if the figure with the lituus is the same as that which at Yasili Kaya is specially designated by the winged disk, it is possible that he is here conceived as offering worship to the two chief deities who head the converging processions in the great gallery. The bull in that case may be a Cappadocian version of the Egyptian earth-god Sibu,

the father of gods and men,¹ the 'bull of Nuit' or Hathor, who was depicted as a heifer, and the mother of the sun-god. This would explain the peculiar Hathor head-dress of the bull-sphinxes the whole symbolising the union of the two celestial natures.

On the whole, the sculptures of Euyuk are cruder and less artistic than those at Boghaz Keui, the figures are not so stately; some of them are grotesquely represented with the heads of dogs and cats, and, with a total lack of perspective, one who is apparently climbing a ladder is made to rest his feet, not on the steps, but on one of the uprights. On the other hand, the animals are drawn with far greater fidelity to nature, and two bas reliefs, representing a lion devouring a ram and a bull butting with his head and pawing the ground, are admirably executed with an unusual freedom from conventionality. The modern village covers so much of the artificial mound on which, as on the 'Tells' of Assyria, the ancient city was built, that it is mere guesswork to attempt as yet to form an opinion either as to its character or its date. A recent traveller, Madame de Chantre,² has expressed the view that the palace was never finished, but there seems to be

¹ Maspero, *Dawn of Civilisation*, p. 87.

² *Tour du Monde*, Sept 5, 1896

little ground for this conclusion, and its dilapidated condition may well be due to the persistent vandalism of the impoverished peasantry, who for so many centuries have used the ruins as a quarry for their own building materials

The scenery in the neighbourhood is dreary beyond description, and no attempt whatever has been made to maintain the road in a proper state of repair. At Chorum we at last rejoined our dragoman and were installed in the konak by the Mutessarif, who obligingly undertook the task of bargaining for us with the arabajis. It proved to be a very difficult and lengthy process, as none of them wished to make the journey to Samsun for fear that their carts would be promptly requisitioned by the authorities for the transport of the ammunition and men returning from the seat of war in Thessaly. Finally it was arranged that our luggage should be taken direct under escort to the coast, while we made a slight *détour* in order to visit Amasia.

Little need be said of the next two days' journey. The road, after climbing a ravine covered with dwarf oak and frequented by numerous red-legged partridges, blue crows, and hoopoes, runs over a wide undulating plain, surrounded by low but picturesque hills and dotted with small villages. We spent a night at

Marsivan, where there are pretty gardens and an American mission and schools, but nowhere in Turkey have I seen a dirtier town, or encountered so many of the animals familiar to man. For this unpleasant experience we had only ourselves to blame, as the Kaimakam would have entertained us at the konak, but, being obliged to start at daybreak, we preferred to sleep at the khan. Sleep, however, was out of the question, and I spent the greater part of the night talking to the Greek zaptieh stationed on guard outside our room—a splendid fellow six feet three in height, who rejoiced in the name of Demosthenes. He was the first and almost the last specimen of a Christian zaptieh I met. It must be owned that it is not entirely the fault of the Government that so few Christians have as yet been enrolled in the gendarmerie in accordance with the stipulation embodied in the scheme of reform lately accepted by the Porte. The Christians themselves have shown no desire to serve, and in many cases have refused to do so. Nor is this very surprising. The zaptieh has to furnish his own horse, and, unless he gets his salary, the only way of supplying himself with the requisite funds is to squeeze what he can out of the villagers. Christian though he is, he would probably be no more averse than his

Mussulman comrade to resorting to such methods; but they would not be tolerated by his victims, and, if a complaint were made, the Government would have no desire to shield him. He would be placing himself in a hopelessly false position, and rendering himself an object of dislike and suspicion to his superiors, without the compensating advantage of being able to protect his co-religionists

That membership of the police force is not always an enviable privilege may be inferred from the following incident. The commanding officer in a certain town had bought up a large number of suitable horses at reduced prices, and whenever a zaptieh had lost his own and was in need of another, he would offer to supply him with an animal in lieu of the salary which was owing to him, and which was probably several months in arrear. Preferring the 'bird in the hand,' the zaptieh naturally closed with the offer, and accepted a compromise very much to his disadvantage; while his superior pocketed a far larger sum than he had spent when at last the funds were disgorged from the imperial exchequer.

The last stage of our journey was much pleasanter than the earlier ones, for the road over the plain was tolerably smooth and the weather glorious. At the

mouth of the ravine, which runs up between splendid cliffs to the town, we were met by a large escort from the Mutessarîf, and drove for more than half an hour by the flourishing orchards and trim hedges festooned with blackberry that fringe the river banks. No more beautiful situation could be imagined than that which Amasia occupies. Built on the two sides of the Yeshil Irmak, which is spanned by five bridges, the red-tiled houses to the right rise in terraces several hundred feet above the valley, while those to the left are overhung by a sheer precipice of over a thousand feet. The summit is crowned by the imposing ruins of an old castle, and half-way up, on the face of the rock, have been perforated the extraordinary sepulchres of the kings of Pontus. The mutessariflik stands close to the water's edge, just below this remarkable cliff, and there we found the governor himself, luxuriously sipping his coffee under the shade of a fine spreading walnut. An old gentleman of very neat and dapper appearance, he was excessively friendly and talkative. Everything was *coulour de rose*. He had just received a telegram announcing the conclusion of the war, and the state of affairs in his own province was eminently satisfactory. The Turks and Armenians, it is true, were perpetually squabbling before he came; but 'I soon put a stop to all



ROCK TOMBS AND TOWN OF AMASIA

that,' he said, 'and now I really believe that they have learned to appreciate the advantages of living in concord and friendship with one another.'

After a brief conversation we returned to the khan on the opposite bank of the river for lunch, and then took a young zaptieh to show us the rock tombs and the castle. The tombs are reached by a flight of steps hewn out of the solid rock and guarded by a parapet. In form they are like enormous sarcophagi, with an arched top, entirely detached from the cliffs, except as regards their base, by a narrow passage about one yard in width and six in height, which runs right round them. A small square opening in the face of the central block gives access to the chamber in which the body was placed. There are five in all, dating probably from the second or third century before Christ, and they face one another across a deep rift by which alone the ascent can be made from the side of the town. The abrupt nature of the ground and the loose rolling stones with which it is covered afford the most precarious foothold, and we should have found it difficult to reach the summit at all but for the assistance of our companion, who climbed with the agility of a goat. The wonderful panorama obtained from this commanding position amply repays the exertion required to attain it; and the castle

itself, which contains remains of every period from the time of Mithridates downwards, is by no means uninteresting. A small ancient cannon occupies a projecting spur of the crag overlooking the river, and close to the battered walls a subterranean rock staircase leads down to a deep clear well of spring water.

There are many architectural fragments in the town which deserve a more detailed and careful examination than the time at our disposal allowed us to devote to them. The doorway of the dilapidated Timur Khané, for instance, is an exquisite specimen of the honeycomb style of decoration, and the mosque of Sultan Bayezid, with its two slender minarets and cool garden watered by fountains, is as beautiful as any that I have seen. The place owes much, too, to the public spirit and liberality of Zia, the poet of the young Turkish party, who at his own expense constructed the excellent metalled road and a picturesque clock tower on the boulevard; but even without any such adventitious advantages, the natural beauty of its position would be alone sufficient to make Amasia by far the fairest and most attractive of all the cities of Asia Minor.

On leaving it we turned a little aside from the Samsun road at the end of the ravine, to visit what is undoubtedly the most imposing of the rock tombs.

Unlike the others, it stands low down by the edge of the path, and owes its name of the 'Mirror' tomb to the extraordinary polish of the stone. Above the sepulchral chamber are traced in large characters the words TH\S APXIEPET\S .

The main road, though excellently laid, is never decently repaired, in spite of the fact that every peasant in its neighbourhood is obliged to work on it for fifteen days in the year.¹ The stones are thrown down anyhow, and never trodden in, as the ox carts and caravans naturally prefer to follow the smoother tracks on each side. The bridges, too, are almost without exception in such a rotten condition that no wheeled traffic can possibly pass over them; so that it not unfrequently happens that one has to ford a stream several times and drive over rough heavy ground merely in order to circumvent them. The scenery is hilly but tame. We put up for the first night at Khavsa, where there is a fine Roman bath, still used by the natives, and in a wonderful state of preservation. The room was full of bathers, and dense with the clouds of steam rising from the natural hot springs, which gush out at a

¹ Such was the account given me at Amasia, but I believe that in practice it is rare to exact more than four days' labour per annum. Every male is liable to the *corvée* from eighteen to seventy years of age unless he procures exemption by the payment of twelve piastres per annum.

temperature of 125° Fahrenheit. Though rather flat, with no perceptible flavour, the water is good, and is supposed to possess valuable medicinal properties for rheumatism and gastric complaints.

Next day we passed an endless succession of caravans and arabas, conveying the ammunition and men from the coast, the drivers looking very sulky at being requisitioned for a service for which they would receive no pay. After crossing the lower ridges of the mountain belt that fringes the southern shores of the Euxine, we slept at a tiny hamlet and commenced the steep ascent of the highest range before the sun had risen. Early as it was, the interminable string of heavily laden camels which carry all the merchandise along this great trade route to Angora and Kaisariyeh, were already on the march, and there was scarcely a quarter of a mile of road on which some were not to be seen. The hillside swarmed with flocks of wild pigeon and partridge; and the view southward over the undulating oak woods and northward over the glittering blue of the sea was indescribably lovely. Slowly and painfully we jolted along over a stony track, which the rains had seamed like the bed of a mountain torrent, and it was not till near mid-day that we drove into Samsun in a pelting hailstorm. From a distance the town looks pretty enough, with its



THE MIRROR TOMB.

glistening white houses and minarets, but inside it is filthy beyond words, and we were not sorry when at last the tedious formalities of the customs-house had been complied with, and we joined Sir John Stirling-Maxwell on the Austrian Lloyd boat, which was to carry us to Trebizond

Trebizond, for two brief centuries the capital of the independent and luxurious empire of the Comneni, lies on a broad tableland, enclosed by two deep valleys which run down from the wooded hills behind it to the sea, and are spanned by several fine bridges. Round the town runs the line of the old Byzantine walls, and there are considerable remains of the castle and fortifications standing above the steep sides of the ravine and covered with a network of creepers. The houses, with their white fronts and red-tiled roofs, clustering among cypress, fig, and laurel, descend in terraces to the edge of the water, on either side of a long promontory which projects into the sea; and perched on the hill overlooking the eastern bay is the little Greek nunnery church of the Theotokos, containing some curious mediæval frescoes. Another beautiful building, the church of St. Sophia, now converted into a mosque, stands on a grassy headland at the western extremity beyond the

ravines and the Turkish parade-ground. It was erected by Manuel I. ; and the three doorways are exquisitely proportioned, but the carving of the lintels has been sadly injured, the mural paintings concealed by a coating of whitewash, and the marble mosaic of the pavement boarded over. Close by is a tall and graceful campanile, affording a magnificent view from the gallery. The mullah in charge was very friendly, and after showing the interior of the building set before us a delicious meal of ripe figs and clotted cream.

Meanwhile the whole of our luggage had been detained at the customs-house, and in order to extract it we were obliged to apply to the Vali for a special permit or 'buyuruldu' in addition to our tezkarés, which would enable us to enter the Erzerum vilayet.

It was commonly reported in the bazaars that the troops in Thessaly were dying like flies of typhoid—nine thousand being confined in hospital at Domokos—and that the Government was as anxious as the Greeks for evacuation. At Trebizond there had been no repetition of disturbances since the massacre; and the Porte had telegraphed orders to the authorities, after the outbreaks at Tokat and Egin, to do their utmost to keep the population quiet.

On the morning of our departure we found that

the muleteers whom we had engaged had absconded at the last moment, fearing that they would be robbed if they accompanied us, as we intended they should, up the side valley which branches off from the Erzerum road to the monastery of Sumela. It was some time before a fresh lot could be hired, and our party started inland by the banks of the Deirman Su. From the naked pointed crags along the sky-line the hills slope gently to the cypress-bordered stream, with here and there a tiny farm, surrounded by narrow cultivated strips of maize, millet, and hemp; or a twig-roofed shanty piled with grapes, melons, and pears for the refreshment of the passer-by, and fringed with bunches of tobacco leaves drying on its sunny walls. After running for several miles over level ground, the road climbs to a great height above the river, which forces its passage between basaltic cliffs of curiously slanting strata. Arrived at the pretty little village of Jevizlik, we sent the 'chaous' to the mudir to ask for an additional zaptieh, as the Sumela road was reported to be infested by brigands. He returned soon after, while we were lunching at the cookshop, to say that the mudir would on no account hear of our leaving the main road, because the permit which we had obtained at Trebizond expressly stated that we were only to be allowed to go

'from cordon to cordon' Thereupon we sent our dragoman to expostulate, but with no better success, so we determined to go and see him ourselves. A zaptieh showed us upstairs, and pushing open the door we discovered the mudir

'Kneeling upon the floor absorbed in silent prayer'

After allowing him a reasonable interval in which to complete his untimely devotions, we re-entered the room and protested strongly against the treatment to which we had been subjected. He shrugged his shoulders, and repeated that he could not possibly go beyond the orders of his superior; but that if we thought a mistake had been made, he would by all means despatch a messenger immediately to Trebizond to ask for further instructions. Meantime would we have tea and cigarettes? The tea was nearly an hour in making, and to his great delight we employed the time in taking his portrait, as he sat solemnly on the chair with his rosary in his hand and his legs tucked under him, after which we retired to sleep in a large unfurnished guest-house belonging to the monastery.

At daybreak the messenger returned with the unwelcome news that the Vali had endorsed the action of the mudir, and absolutely forbidden him to let us leave the road. Again the dragoman went to remonstrate,

but was politely told that if we attempted to go to Sumela, steps would be taken at all cost to prevent us. We then formed a brilliant scheme, which we forthwith proceeded to put into execution. We ordered our horses back to the stables, said that we should not want luncheon before one o'clock, and then, hoping that we had effectually disarmed suspicion, strolled out along the stream as if we were merely admiring the beauty of the scenery. As soon as we were out of sight we struck the Sumela road, intending to walk to the monastery and return before nightfall. It was of no use. We had not gone twenty yards before a zaptieh appeared behind us shouting and making frantic gesticulations. We waited till he came up, and observed that as it was splendid weather for fishing, and as for the present we were not allowed to go to Sumela, it seemed a pity not to ascertain before the evening the most likely pools on the upper reaches. 'Of course,' we added, 'we should be delighted to have his company if he took the same interest in the noble sport as we did, and did not mind the fatigue of the walk.' To this he merely replied by a knowing wink and a grin, and calling three of his companions who had also followed us, proceeded to bar the path so effectually that, short of employing force, which was manifestly hopeless, there was nothing

for it but to resign ourselves to the inevitable, and walk back to the village. Then, as a last chance, one of our party rode back to Trebizond to see if anything could be done to overcome the scruples of the governor, while the others spent the remainder of the day, which was unusually hot, in a futile endeavour to beguile the trout, shadowed all the time by the zaptiehs, who evidently regarded the whole thing as a transparent device to cover another escapade.

But in the end we gained our point. At first the Vali refused to see any one, on the ground that twenty female relatives of his had just arrived with his son, who was ill, and consequently the only person who could be allowed access to him was the cook! A second application was more successful. The dragoman of the consulate was admitted; the story of our attempt to evade the authorities at Jevizlik was detailed to him, and he was informed that the Vali could not consent to revise his decision. It appears that a spy of the Palace, who heard that we had landed without an order from the Sultan, and that the governor had notwithstanding given us one on his own responsibility, at once reported the matter by telegram to Constantinople. The Vali, being warned of this, immediately wired to the mudir at Jevizlik and the Mutessarif at Gumush Khané, that not-

withstanding his previous written sanction, they were to arrest and detain us whenever we arrived and, if possible, persuade us to return. At the same time he telegraphed to the Porte that 'three English lords' had arrived and gone for an excursion up country, but that, pending instructions from the capital, he had warned them not to cross the boundaries of his own vilayet. Here it seemed was an absolute deadlock, for the only chance of our being able to enter Armenia lay in the possibility of our evading the vigilance of the officials, who had shown themselves hostile from the outset to our making the journey. But luckily the Vali's mind was distracted quite as much by the fear of incurring blame for his discourtesy in detaining us, as by the fear that he would be punished for allowing us to proceed. The result was that after much agitation he devised an ingenious compromise, which in either alternative would leave him a colourable excuse for his action. He consented to cancel his orders to the authorities at Jevizlik and Gumush Khané, and to do nothing to interfere with our movements during the four or five days which must elapse before a despatch could arrive from Constantinople. Meanwhile, of course, 'we should go where we chose, even to Sumela, on condition that we afterwards return to the chaussée, and if we succeeded in crossing

the frontier, how could he be responsible for such a calamity? He would of course plead, and with perfect truth, that we had deliberately disregarded his injunctions. The sequel showed that his mind soon misgave him as to the wisdom of this plausible arrangement, but we did not suspect this at the time, and, rejoiced at the final success of our efforts, we sent word to the mudir that we had decided to start for the monastery at daybreak, and that the necessary escort must be ready to accompany us.

CHAPTER IV

SUMELA TO ERZERUM

ON the out journey, our three and a half hours' ride was rather spoiled by the weather—a thick curtain of mist covering the hills and driving up the valley from the north, so that we could obtain only occasional glimpses of the superb scenery. The road winds along the densely wooded slopes at a great height above the stream, which is crossed by several quaint little bridges with vaulted coverings of timber; and a number of diminutive white churches with slate roofs peep from their rocky eyries among the dark masses of walnut and pine. The monastery itself is built against the wall of a smooth precipice near the summit of a hill, strewn with boulders and clothed with a thick belt of firs from its centre to its base. A zigzag path winds up to the level platform from which it springs, and from this point the door is gained by a great flight of steps along the face of the cliff.

At the entrance we found the Archimandrite, Gerasimus, and his brother priests collected to welcome us;

and passing through two courtyards, in the centre of one of which stands a tiny bell tower and the natural rock cavern that forms the main portion of the church, we were ushered into the guest-room to partake of a preliminary refreshment in the shape of coffee and cigarettes. The monks told us that the monastery had been built a thousand years ago, and that the Archimandrite himself had lived there for more than thirteen. None of them could speak anything but Greek, except one who had recently been admitted, and, having learned a modicum of almost unintelligible French, was deputed to show us the library and the chapel. The latter is very small and dark, being lighted principally by a few lamps of fine-wrought silver, suspended from the roof. In a cupboard to the left of the altar are a quantity of relics, a handsome chased silver casket containing a decayed bone, once part of the anatomy of St. Barnabas, and a splendid Byzantine manuscript of the Gospels. On a screen in front of the sanctuary hangs a picture which might represent anything in the world, but it was painted by St. Luke, and its frame is a really magnificent piece of carving. Two portentously fat candles are especially prized as the generous gift of the Sultan, Selim I. That the library was not much used by the monks we inferred from the

fact that the lock of the door was so rusty that our combined exertions were necessary in order to turn the key. The room, too, was inches deep in dust, and its contents a little disappointing. There were one or two illuminated missals, neatly written, but of no great age, and the majority of the volumes were copies more or less recent of the works of the early Fathers. We lunched with our hosts before leaving, and prevailed on the Archimandrite to sit for his portrait. Arrayed for the occasion in full canonicals, a long black cassock, the tall black chimney-pot head-dress of the Greek Church, and a superb cross of brilliants round his neck, he looked a very imposing personage, but unfortunately the picture failed completely, although he good-naturedly sat outside in the drenching rain that we might have the advantage of what little light there was. The whole fraternity accompanied us to the gate to bid us an affectionate farewell, and long after we had parted from them we saw the long-robed group still standing among the mist wreaths at the top of the great stairway watching our descent. So few travellers ever pass their way that our visit had probably been quite as novel and pleasant an experience to them as it had been to ourselves.

While two of our party remained behind to sketch the view of the monastery from below, the third rode

leisurely back by himself, but half an hour later he was discovered sitting disconsolately by the roadside, having been brought to a standstill by a cordon of police, who regarded his appearance as suspicious, and declined to let him pass until our zaptiehs came up, considerately remarking that they generally shot straight, and would give him an opportunity of judging if he insisted on passing them.

The return journey was more satisfactory from the point of view of the scenery than the outward one had been, as towards evening the mists cleared off from the hills. The thickets of rhododendron and yellow azalea which border the path must present a gorgeous appearance in their full spring bloom; but at this time of year almost the only flowers or fruit to be seen were the large blue and white crocuses, the bramble, and the scarlet Cape gooseberry. The natives believe this fruit to be excessively poisonous, and our zaptiehs, on discovering that we had eaten it, imparted to us the cheerful information that half a dozen of the berries had been known to produce fatal results. A similar belief is widely entertained with regard to the honey found in the district, and reminds one of Xenophon's famous account of its intoxicating effect upon the Greeks, which has been commonly attributed to the azalea

flowers, from which it is derived. On one occasion, after eating some of this honey, I was on the point of embarking upon a slice of red water-melon, when the cook interposed with an exclamation of horror, declaring that the fruit, when brought into contact with the honey, would at once become congealed into crystals so large and solid as to set up acute internal inflammation, resulting in death within the space of a few hours.

On reaching Jevizlik we found that the guest-house had been invaded by the retinue of Shakir Pasha, who, as President of the Commission of Inquiry into the condition of the Anatolian vilayets, was now on his way from Erzerum to Sivas and Angora. Shakir himself is commonly reported to be a Yuruk,¹ a member of a tribe which, though nominally Mohammedan, is credited with the same latitudinarian views of religion as the Kızılbaş, and consequently much despised by the orthodox. The President had actually ejected our baggage from the room which we had previously occupied, and even suggested that we ought to look out for quarters elsewhere, as it was not fitting that his womankind should be subjected to the gaze of Firenghis. This, of course, we declined to do, and, judging from the

¹ The Yuruks are a nomad tribe, so called from the Turkish verb meaning 'to walk'.

freedom and unconcern with which one of the ladies conversed with our dragoman, the fair sex did not appear to take the same rigid views of decorum as their lord and master.

Of all the absurd farces connected with the execution of the reform scheme, none have been so ridiculous as the appointment of Shakir's commission. It has been a mere contrivance for putting money into the pockets of the commissioners at the expense of the already starved vilayets in whose interests it was supposed to sit. No less a sum than seven thousand Turkish pounds was charged upon the Aleppo province alone, in return for which it derived no advantage whatever, and so perfunctorily did the members perform their duties that in the vilayet of Adana, where disturbances were especially rife and official misconduct most glaring, they completed their inquiry to their own satisfaction in the space of half a week. No one wanted to hear their report, for the issue had already been prejudged; and if Shakir summoned up energy enough to order the release of Armenian prisoners in pursuance of the amnesty decree, as he did at Kharput, the only result was that the inspector telegraphed to Constantinople that the judicial affairs of the province were being interfered with, and the order remained a dead letter.

The road from Jevizlık lies through a beautiful glen watered by the Deirman Su, which at one point flows for a considerable distance underground. We lunched on the verandah of a small chalet overlooking the village of Hampsi Keu, and commanding a magnificent view of the valley—the middle distance cut by the bold outline of two sheer cliffs streaked with brilliant red, one topped by the ruins of a castle and the other by a little Greek church. The number of these places of worship indicates the presence of a Christian element in the district which, although much reduced by persecution and massacre, is still very considerable. High up on the western slopes stands a monastery dedicated to the Virgin, in appearance and position similar to that of Sumela.

No mere word-painting can convey an adequate idea of the extraordinary beauty and variety of the forest which clothes the declivities of the great Zigana range. Alder, beech, maple, hornbeam, spruce, walnut, plane, wild cherry, hazel, and rowan grow together in luxuriant profusion, the favourite haunt of a large species of red deer, and aglow with the gorgeous bloom of rhododendrons and azaleas. But if the traveller is surprised at this wealth of verdure, he is more startled by the sudden and complete contrast which meets his eye on reaching the

summit of the pass (6588 feet) Before him stretches a bleak and desolate panorama, altogether destitute of vegetation, the naked ochre-tinted hills sloping steeply into deep and scarred ravines, as wild and grand as the mountainous regions of Southern Persia.

It was intensely cold by the time we had finished the ascent and halted to breathe our horses at a little shed heaped with an uninviting store of half-ripe apples and pears. To the south, beyond the last dark belt of firs among which the mists were floating, rose, bank upon bank, an endless succession of ranges fading from a deep purple to the faintest hues of turquoise and violet. We took a short-cut down the stony ridge by a small track over which the animals had some difficulty in picking their way, and rode along the curves of the hills at a gigantic height above the valley. Once or twice we passed a village where the women were threshing corn on the roofs of their houses, and where we first remarked the curious conical-shaped excrescence in the walls which, as in the Dolomite country, serves the purpose of an oven. We had been nearly twelve hours in the saddle, and the twilight was already filling with a darker indigo the two great rifts into which the valley branches before we came in view of our destination. A second short-cut, more narrow and precipitous than

the last, brought us down to the river level, and soon afterwards we crossed a bridge and reached the village of Ardossa, behind which tower a series of jagged cliffs crowned with the ruins of a castle. Here we rejoined our muleteers who had been sent in advance with the baggage, and took up our quarters in a bare room in the khan, which, though innocent of windows, was luckily also innocent of fleas.

The next day's ride through the same wild and barren scenery was uneventful except for the incident of one of our mules backing with its load over the rocky bank into the stream. At Magara Khan there is a natural cave close to the water, which we explored out of curiosity. It is divided into two chambers, one large and one small, but we could discover no outlet for either. Clambering up a shaft on the right side we reached a platform, from which we looked down into the main vault swarming with terrified bats. The ground is covered with markings, which at first we took to be those of a bear, but subsequently concluded that they were merely the effect of dripping from the roof. There is no trace of artificial excavation, but the place may possibly have once been used as a granary or storehouse. At midday we reached a village lying among orchards of quince and cherry at the foot of the hill upon which the

large town of Gumush Khané¹ is built, and sat down in the khan to refresh ourselves with some of the largest grapes ever seen out of an English conservatory.

While we were thus agreeably employed a 'bimbashi' made his appearance to convey to us the compliments of the Mutessarif, and his request that we would ride up and pay him a visit. On our politely declining, as we had another stage to cover before sunset, he replied that, alas! it was not always possible in Turkey to do exactly as one wished. Suspecting that something was wrong, we offered to comply with the governor's desire on condition that our caravan was allowed to proceed, so that by riding hard we might overtake them at Tekke. To this the bimbashi made no objection; and feeling reassured, as soon as we had despatched the mules we cantered up to the town, which rises in terraces up the two sides of a deep cleft between desert hills. Half-way up a courtly old gentleman met us, and introducing himself as the Greek moavin to the governor, informed us in French that an order had just been received from the Vali at Trebizond to the effect

¹ "The House of Silver," so called from the neighbouring mines. Careri, who passed through it in 1683, mentions a gold-mine in the valley six miles to the south, which had been abandoned owing to its inundation by the river' (Churchill's *Collection of Voyages*, vol. iv., published in 1745: 'Voyage round the World by Dr John Francis Genelli Careri,' translated from the Italian)



PARTRIDGE-SHOOTING AT GUMUSH KHANÍ

that we were to be arrested as soon as we arrived, and urged to retrace our steps immediately. An interview with the Mutessarif convinced us that there was nothing to do but to accept the inevitable, and after sending a telegram to the Embassy at Constantinople and a zaptich to recall our caravan, we made our way, escorted by a deeply interested crowd, to a comfortable house which had been prepared beforehand for our reception. Visits in Turkey are generally returned without loss of time, and an hour had not elapsed before the governor looked in, and after profuse apologies for the inconvenience he had been compelled to inflict upon us, considerately offered us the services of a local sportsman who was reported to have an intimate acquaintance with the best partridge grounds in the vicinity, and would help us to while away the time of our detention.

Of the next three days there is little to relate. Once, and once only, did we shoot along the steep and rocky declivities at the back of the town. Not merely was it difficult to walk at all on such ground, but the red legs (of which there were a great quantity) so invariably sighted our approach a mile away, that when we left off, a single bird formed our total bag. The local sportsman, however, with a handkerchief dangling from under his red fez, tramped along in the broiling heat with an

enthusiasm which nothing could damp, and though the results were *nil*, at all events he managed to expend a very creditable number of cartridges. But if the sport left something to be desired, the scenery was as fine as such a desert landscape can be, where, save for the trees that bordered the stream and a few medlars scattered over the hillside, the eye roamed over a vast and arid expanse of rock and shale, flecked here and there with blotches of red or sulphurous yellow. In the town itself the only object of interest is the Armenian church, on the outer walls of which there is a beautiful bit of the interlaced carving so common on the ruins of Ani.

At last the telegram authorising us to proceed arrived from Sir Philip Currie; and on the afternoon of the second day after our departure we reached the interesting ruins of Varzahan, situated in the centre of a large plain a few miles from Baiburt. The remains of two Armenian churches, and of what appears to have been originally a baptistery, are beautiful examples of twelfth century architecture. The smaller church has a pretty archway roofed with a shell design like that of the mihrab in the mosque at Cordova. The larger, and more perfect, is of octagonal shape, its columns representing a group of slender stems tied by love-knots for

capitals The interior is peculiar, the two sides presenting an appearance which, if pleasing, is altogether destitute of symmetry. A pillar on the south stands clear of the wall, whereas the corresponding one on the north, which is carved with an almost identical design, is left undetached. An exquisite little triple window, not ten feet from the ground, and which has no counterpart opposite, is adorned with an intricate and delicate rose-pattern of twisted tracery¹

Our zaptieh's horse had fallen lame, and it was consequently near sunset before we arrived at Baiburt. Like Angora and Amasia, it forms a striking contrast to the majority of Eastern towns, which are so often built on the flat. Running along the hillslopes on either side of the Choruk Su, it is dominated by a cliff descending on one side perpendicularly into the river, the summit of which is girdled by a long line of fortifications. The castle was built by the Armenians and restored by the Seljuks, and the walled enclosure contains, besides, the dilapidated fragments of a Christian church. Let into small holes along the face of one of the battlements are a number of bluish-green tiles, which the natives allege to have been the work of an Italian. We paid a visit

¹ Fergusson in his *History of Architecture* classes this building with a smaller one at Ani as sepulchral chapels, from the analogy of their designs to those of the ordinary native tombs.

to the Konak, and were informed by the Kaimakam that he had placed at our disposal a house belonging to a Greek merchant on the opposite bank of the stream—a most palatial residence, decorated with a profusion of cut glass ornaments, showy wall paintings, and the usual oleographs of the crowned heads of Europe, which exercise such a fascination on the æsthetic sense of Orientals. The master of the house pleaded his inability to entertain us owing to the absence of his family, who had taken with them his *chef de cuisine*, so we procured our dinner from a neighbouring cookshop. Next morning we had a serious quarrel with our muleteers. They had quietly stopped for the night at Varzahan, and on their arrival at Baiburt had thrown off the luggage and declined even to come to our house or to proceed a step further that day. It was of no use to carry matters to extremities, as the only result of committing the men to prison would have been to detain us as witnesses, but after sending a *zaptieh* to fetch them, and threatening them with the terrors of the law, we at last induced them to push on a short stage.

After a visit to the castle and the crowded bazaar, where several groups of natives were engaged in shoeing their buffaloes on the ground, the feet of the unfortunate animals being tied together and their heads strapped

BAIBURT



back to the shoulder, we set off for a two hours' ride to Maden Khan. On the road we passed a large caravan of Persian merchants, wearing the astrachan bonnets of Tabriz, and carrying bales of Manchester goods and Indian tea *via* Erzerum. The latter commodity forms more than a quarter of the whole transit trade, amounting to over three millions annually, between England and India and the north-west provinces of Persia, and being forced to follow the long and difficult route through Turkish territory, or the equally disadvantageous road from the Gulf, by the high tariff rates imposed on goods passing *via* Afghanistan or the Caucasus, it is severely handicapped at the start for competition with Russia, and must eventually be extinguished with the extension and consolidation of her political influence over Azerbaijan. Even in the case of Turkey, which takes one-twentieth of the cotton manufactures we send abroad, and of whose aggregate imports and exports England monopolises between a half and a third, our commerce shows a steady tendency to decline, although for the present the 'open door' is maintained, and our goods still predominate in the bazaars of the Trebizond vilayet. The night was so cold that although we put up our tent we preferred to take our meal of rice and omelet, execrably cooked by an incompetent Greek, whom in

CHAPTER V

ERZERUM TO ARARAT

THE best idea of most Eastern towns is gained by mounting to the roofs of the buildings which command an almost uninterrupted view in every direction. The general features vary very little, but the charm of Erzerum does not lie in the sea of flat mud housetops, broken here and there by a dome or minaret, but in the broad expanse of plain which it overlooks, surrounded on every side by an unbroken chain of hills crowned with numerous forts. To the east is a long reach of swampy ground, a hotbed of malaria, and the resort of wildfowl of every description. A few old streets of picturesque houses, with projecting wooden balconies, still remain, but the majority are uninteresting, excessively dirty and, during the cold season, often choked with the snow which is thrown from the roofs and allowed to lie until the thaw sets in. A large proportion of the population is perennially absorbed in the manufacture of tezek or animal-fuel—(that of asses is especially prized)—which they

collect from the stables, bake carefully in the sun, and then stack for winter consumption. In addition to the Turkish community, the town contains a large number of Kurds and Armenians; and the School of San Saurian, founded for the latter by one of their co-religionists, is an important and flourishing institution. Besides a large dormitory and class-rooms it contains a natural history museum, and a good workshop in which instruction in turning and carpentering is given. It provides accommodation for one hundred and fifty scholars, and the education, conducted on the German plan, comprises in its curriculum, among other subjects, the teaching of French, German, Turkish, and Armenian, ancient and modern.

Close by is a park in which we were shown the broad trench dug to receive the corpses of the four hundred Armenian victims of the recent massacre; but there is no inscription, not even a rude cross, as at Trebizond, to mark the spot. The place is chiefly frequented by the Christian women of the town, and near it stands the church surrounded by tombstones and crosses, which in design and tracery bear a strong resemblance to the Celtic art of Ireland and Iona. In a crevice of the exterior wall by the door, the faithful deposit a unique form of votive offering in

the shape of their own teeth.¹ The side chapel contains a few liturgies and bibles bound in old covers of chased silver.

But San Saurian is not the only educational establishment of which Erzerum can boast. An equal number of children, many of them lately orphaned, are boarded and educated in the American school, over which Mr. Chambers, the missionary, presides. Almost all the scholars are Armenians, drawn from different and often distant districts, but the school is open to every denomination; and in the kindergarten class we saw one shaven-pated little brat whose father, a Mohammedan mullah, had told the managers that they might teach his son whatever they pleased. One of the mistresses, whose acquaintance we made, was the daughter of Hadji Khanoum, an old woman still undergoing imprisonment on the monstrous charge that she had assaulted a hulking Kurd, who entered her cottage during the riots, and

¹ Curzon, in his book on Armenia and Erzerum, relates an amusing story which aptly illustrates this curious practice. A Roman Catholic Armenian of Smyrna had registered a vow that, if he was cured of his toothache he would present an offering to the shrine of St George in that city. Failing to obtain relief, he was advised by a friend to vow a silver mouth to St. George of Erzerum, 'for,' said he, 'St. George of Smyrna is a Roman Saint and can have no authority here, but our St. George is an Armenian and will answer your prayer'

caused his death by kicking him in the stomach. The course of instruction extends over nine years, and some of the children whose parents do not require their help at home pass on to the larger college at Kharput. Adjoining the building is a small shop where the boys are taught shoemaking. As we passed through the dormitories, Mr. Chambers pointed out the mark of a rifle bullet which had been deliberately fired through the window and had pierced the door. The rioters had meditated an attack, but a single shot aimed over their heads before they commenced fortunately put them all to flight.

The Vali, Raouf Pasha, was on leave, and in his absence we called on the Military Commandant, a fine old soldier formerly belonging to the staff of Zekki, the notorious head of the Fourth Army Corps, and the reputed founder of the Hamidieh System. A Bosnian of high rank and ancient family, he expressed himself keenly alive to the backward condition of Turkey in many respects, contrasting the rapid advance made by his native country since her emancipation with the stagnation which prevails in some of the more remote provinces still subject to Ottoman rule. Few mistakes are greater or more common than the supposition that even the governing classes of the

Empire are insensible to these evils, or obstinately opposed to progress of a rational kind. Prevalent as corruption is among them, the fault attaches to the system far more than to individuals, and honesty requires a sense of public duty, a sacrifice of private interest, which is not demanded among ourselves. The wonder is rather, and it speaks volumes for the national character, that well-intentioned and upright men should be found at all in positions of trust, for where neither the high placed official nor the humble zaptich receives adequate remuneration for their services, and is lucky if he receives any, the one naturally supplies the deficiency by extortion or peculation from the provincial revenues, leaving no surplus to defray the cost of public works, and the other from the downtrodden peasantry from whom he collects the taxes. So long as the system is allowed to continue, and no thorough reorganisation of the national finances is undertaken, a governor, however excellent his principles, is forced to violate them, unless he is able and willing to meet the expenses incidental to his station out of private resources; and a zaptieh, even if relieved of the duty of enforcing the payment of taxes by the appointment of official 'Tahsildars,' must invent some other method of recouping himself for the arrears in his salary, out

of which he is expected to provide and feed his own horse.

The ruling classes at the capital are probably the only section of the community which profits as a whole from a condition of things which impoverishes the exchequer, and keeps up a permanent and sullen discontent in all ranks of the army. The ingrained fatalism of the race, the utter lack of education, the hopelessness born of centuries of despotism, alone explain its amazing acquiescence in a situation which in any European country would long ago have provoked a popular revolt or a military rising. It may well be doubted whether any Sultan, however enlightened, however sympathetic towards the party of reform, will be able to purify the administration or break through the vested interests of corruption which it has created, unless or until national bankruptcy or outside pressure enables him to plead necessity as a justification for calling in foreign aid to reorganise the finances of his Empire.

The most beautiful building in Erzerum is the old Medresseh, erected by the Seljuks in the twelfth century, and now in an advanced state of decay. The two graceful minarets are decorated with blue tiles, and upon the façade, which is covered with the richest

carving, appears the blazon of the double-headed eagle. The interior is used as an ammunition store, and visitors are not admitted. These restrictions are often carried to absurd lengths, and such is the jealousy with which the movements of Europeans in the neighbourhood of even the most ruinous fortifications are watched that, as we subsequently discovered, a telegram had been sent a few days before by the governor of Baiburt to the commandant at Erzerum, informing him of our having photographed the castle there, and asking for instructions. The commandant, with unusual common sense, replied that so far as he was concerned we might take a thousand views if we pleased of that useless monument of antiquity.

The citadel deserves a visit, but it has been much restored, and the slipshod modern work compares most unfavourably with the splendid square-cut blocks of the ancient masonry. One might expect that a town lying at the juncture of the main trade routes to Samsun, Sivas, and Tabriz would afford unusual opportunities to the collector of old embroideries, carpets, and curios of every kind, but the bazaars are uninteresting. Those who live long in the place may from time to time pick up a good thing among the miscellaneous wares of the 'dellals,' but most of the really antique work has been

swept up by the agents of the commercial houses of Europe, and the traveller is offered little else but Roman and Byzantine coins—many of them forgeries—and specimens of Armenian jewellery, which is not unlike the graceful fretwork of the Norwegian silver-smiths.

The main road from Erzerum to Bayazid has few attractions, and being anxious to see something of Trans-Caucasia, we chose the less direct route which runs through Kars and Alexandropol to Ararat. After crossing the ridge behind the town it traverses the Passin plain, so called from the Phasis of Xenophon, the ancient name for the Araxes. We stopped to lunch at the village of Hassan Kaleh, at the foot of a castle-crowned rock, and followed the river till nightfall, when we put up in an 'odagh' at Keupri Keui. Our host, an Armenian, had reason to be grateful for our timely arrival, for it saved him the beating which a Turkish officer, with whose unwelcome attentions to his daughter he had attempted to interfere, was about to administer. She was a handsome girl profusely decorated with necklaces of gold coins, and her father was loud in his lamentation over the defenceless condition of his people. Nor, in spite of our assurances to the contrary, could he bring himself to relinquish the hope that we

were accredited envoys from the British Government empowered to make an arrangement with the Russians across the border, that they should take over the administration of the country. The room assigned to us was little better than an underground vault reeking with a fine assortment of odours, for the horses, cattle, and poultry were crowded together in close proximity to the narrow strips of felt on which we spread our bedding by the side of a 'tezek' fire.

The sun rose behind a dark bank of heavy thunder-clouds, and on the blurred horizon we caught a faint glimpse of the distant mass of Ararat. The road crosses the Araxes by a fine bridge, and runs over heavy undulating ground to Zanzakh, a cluster of wretched Armenian hovels. Beyond it lies a broad bare plateau held by the Turkish troops in the last war; and at the eastern end, on the summit of an almost inaccessible rock, stand the picturesque ruins of the castle of Zevin. It wanted but an hour to sunset as we drove up to the frontier-post at Issi Su, not more than five hundred yards from the little guard-house over which the Russian flag was hoisted. Here the customs-house officer courteously invited us to take tea with him while our tezkars were being examined in an adjacent house by the Kaimakam.

BY THE ARAXES



Presently a messenger arrived with the news that permission could not be given us to cross the frontier, as the passports did not authorise us to leave the country, although they stated that we might re-enter it at Bayazid. The amount of argument necessary to convince the governor that you must leave a place before you could return to it drove us almost to desperation; but at last, with much searching of heart, he allowed us to re-enter our carriage. No sooner had we done so than, like Pharaoh of old, he repented his weakness, and sent in haste to say that he must insist on our waiting until he could obtain definite instruction from the authorities at Erzerum. A second debate ensued, more heated than the last, and the poor little man, after consulting all his subordinates, in a state of pitiable bewilderment, finally consented to release us on a pledge from the officer who had accompanied us that he would take the responsibility on his own shoulders if any trouble was raised at headquarters. Meanwhile the sun had gone down, and our chances of passing the Russian outposts were rapidly vanishing. Telling the arabaji to drive as fast as he could, we had already entered the stream which divides the two territories, when behold! a third messenger appeared signalling to us with frantic gesticulations to stop.

This time we took no notice—the driver flogged his team, and in a moment we were safe on Russian soil and beyond the reach of Turkish officialdom

But our difficulties were not at an end yet. First our passports had to be given up to a couple of soldiers who came out to demand them, and then, resuming our much interrupted progress, we were brought up short at a barrier stretched across the road, behind which a sentry was solemnly pacing. We were too late, he said. it was out of the question that we could enter Karaorgan that night, but if we liked we might go back to the Turkish side and call again in the morning. We thanked him, but said that rather than repeat the last hour's experience we should much prefer to remain where we were till daybreak, and after some delay a messenger was found to take the letter of introduction which we had received from the Russian Consulate at Erzerum to the customs-house officer. Twenty minutes elapsed before the order arrived to admit us, and the moment we entered the village, quite a regiment boarded the vehicle, seized hold of every article of luggage and deposited the plunder in the douane, after which, having despoiled us of everything but the clothes in which we stood, they bade us depart in peace to whatever quarters we could find. The laws of the customs-house,

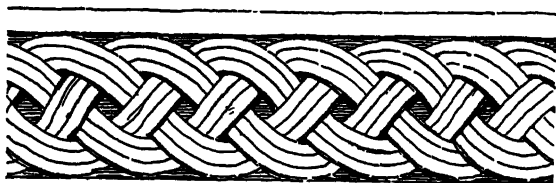
inexorable as those of the Medes and Persians, sternly prohibited any examination till the morning, and it was only as a very special act of indulgence that the rule was relaxed in the case of our bedding, which we carried off in triumph to a bare room, where we were welcomed by swarms of creatures as hungry but more fortunate than ourselves, for, having vainly appealed to the resources of the kitchen, we went supperless to sleep.

After an hour's delay next morning we got our baggage safely packed into two troikas, a shell-like species of cart on two wheels, and started ourselves in a four-horse droshky driven by a strapping fellow in ample blue-pleated flounces. The presence of a large drove of pigs in the main street and the substitution of stone for mud buildings were almost the sole indications of our having entered a new country, except that what had been the roughest of tracks hitherto was exchanged for a really well-laid carriage road. Not far from the frontier, at a few paces from the road, we found a copious spring of mineral water which gushes out in a state of strong effervescence; and at the end of thirty-five versts of hilly country sparsely dotted with fir plantations, we changed horses at Sarikamish, a straggling village consisting of a single broad street

of considerable length. The snow-white cone of Ararat was plainly visible from the vast cultivated flat which extends with scarcely a break right up to the foot of the Caucasus, and late in the evening we passed a small colony of Molokani, a curious people, who are said to entertain as strong an objection to religious exercises as to military service, and live in detached wooden houses ranged at regular intervals of about thirty yards along a line certainly not less than half a mile in extent. The most noticeable characteristic of the inhabitants is the peculiar fairness of their complexion and the light colour of their hair, in some cases verging on grey.

Our journey in the dark was enlivened by a race with a rival droshky, the driver of which was so exhilarated by copious potations of vodka that, seeing himself distanced, he took a short-cut, boldly put his horses at a wide ditch that lay between him and the road, and cleared it triumphantly—but the occupants remained on the further side, having prudently flung themselves out of either door before the critical moment arrived.

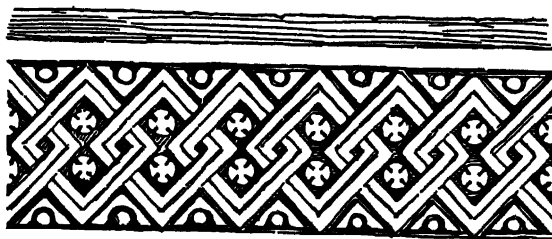
The slanting rays of a low full moon were glinting on the remarkable castle rock and the river that winds below it as we entered Kârs, the principal centre of



CORNICE OF LANTERN



BLIND ARCHES OF LANTERN (EXTERIOR)



MAIN CORNICE

the Russian military occupation and the scene of a struggle memorable in the annals of English heroism—the defence of General Williams in the Crimean War. The town is little else than an armed camp, and every other person one meets is a soldier. No one crossing from Turkey can fail to be struck with the smartness of the regiments, and few spectacles are more impressive than that of a company marching past—all the men singing, to the accompaniment of the band, the words of the National Anthem. The majority of the men are short, but well set up and magnificently drilled; and if ever Turkey has to meet such a force in the field with her undisciplined and ill-equipped rabble of Hamidieh cavalry, she may well be hopeless of the result. The fortifications, which have been considerably improved and strengthened since the war, are of course not shown; and the only building worth seeing is the old church, which has been well restored, and is almost a facsimile of the ruins of the same period at Ani some twenty-five miles further east. These are most interesting not only for their wonderful preservation, but also from the historical associations which attach to this centre of the old Armenian Kingdom. A people of Aryan stock allied to the Medes, their origin is lost in the mists of antiquity, though native tradition traces

their descent from the two sons of Noah, Shem and Japhet. At the dawn of the Christian Era they appear to have been ruled no longer by a single dynasty,—as they had been since the middle of the sixth century B.C. by the Haikian dynasty of Tigranes I., which was brought to a close at the battle of Arbela, and afterwards by the Arsacid Tigranes II., the ally of Mithridates—but by a number of petty princes at various centres, one of whom, Abgarus, King of Edessa—the modern Urfah—is famed in legendary history for his request that he might send an artist to paint the portrait of our Lord. Three years after the Crucifixion he and a number of his subjects accepted the teaching of Saints Thaddeus and Bartholomew, but it was not till three centuries later that the recognition of the truths of Christianity by Tiridates set the seal on the national conversion, and Gregory the Illuminator, who baptised his royal kinsman and proselyte, conferred the patriarchal primacy on the See of Echmiadzin.

The beginning of the fifth century witnessed the introduction of the Monophysite heresy, and the Armenian Church, by its subscription to the doctrine of Eutychus, cut itself off from the Greek and Latin communions. Once more the nation fell a prey to internal dissension, and for five hundred years was



ARMENIAN PRIEST AT ANI

overrun by the Kurds and Circassians. It was at the close of this period that Ani, which since 400 A.D. had formed the capital of the Bagratid kings ruling generally as tributaries to the Arabs, became the centre of the newly founded kingdom of Kars. Its independence however was a short lived one. In 1046 the town was voluntarily ceded by its ruler, Gagig II., to the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX., and in less than thirty years it fell a victim to the victorious army of Alp Arslan and was altogether abandoned.

Picturesque relics of its chequered history survive in the numerous conical-roofed churches and massive walls—forty to fifty feet high, flanked by numerous round towers, and protected on two sides by deep gorges, through one of which flows the Arpa Chai. The prevailing colour of the stonework—a dull uniform yellow—is relieved in places by the introduction of black basalt arranged in patterns or large crosses, and the exterior of many of the churches and the surface of the tombstones are enriched with sculpture of a very beautiful and delicate character. Innumerable caverns embellished with rude and often grotesque carving perforate the western gorge, and the whole area is covered with an accumulation of *débris*. A solitary priest has charge of the ruins and keeps the key of one

of the least dilapidated churches, on the internal walls of which may be seen the faint remains of coloured frescoes

The road from Ani to Alexandropol follows the banks of the river, which are frequented by swarms of pelican and cormorants, and we put up at night in an odagh some six versts from the town. The weather had turned much colder, and next morning a fresh sprinkling of snow had covered the lower slopes as well as the spire-like cliffs of Mount Alageuz. It was not till we had passed the eastern spur that the drizzle of rain and sleet stopped, and full before us in the soft golden glow of the setting sun rose the broad bulk and glittering peak of Greater Ararat, and beside it the perfect cone of its lesser companion, whose summit marks the meeting-place of three great empires. Miles away sparkled the distant lights of Echmiadzin, appearing and disappearing like Will o' the Wisp in the gathering gloom behind the undulating ridges of the plain; and when after a seemingly interminable drive we at length reached it, it was only to make the disheartening discovery that it contained no hotel or guest-house of any kind. A long parley ensued at the gates of the monastery, the long high walls of which fronted the street, but at last we gained admission and

received a hospitable welcome from the monks, who assigned to us a very comfortable room opening upon the verandah that runs round the courtyard.

In the centre of a large open space adjoining the monastery stands the great Cathedral church, the Mecca of every faithful Armenian, and hallowed alike by the associations of its history and the legend of its sacred origin. Built on the very spot where the Saviour appeared in vision to St. Gregory, every art was employed by the arch enemy of mankind to arrest or prevent its completion. No sooner had the walls been raised to the height of a man than the Devil during the night destroyed all that had been erected in the daytime, and it was not until a second manifestation of the Divine presence had been vouchsafed that his persistent malevolence was defeated.

Whatever beauty the edifice may once have possessed, little trace of it remains to-day, for, with the exception of the richly carved west end tower and belfry dating from the seventh century, it has lost most of its original features in the later Russian restorations. The interior is hung with rare and costly silks and carpets, and on either side of the altar are two handsome thrones richly carved and inlaid with mother of pearl—one of them the gift of Pope Innocent XI.

Close by is an academy for Georgians, an Armenian printing-press, and a library which contains, besides a number of missals splendidly illuminated, the Imperial Charter of the Emperor Nicholas I. regulating the privileges of the monastery and its duties in relation to the State. A little beyond the precincts is a large artificial tank shaded on all four sides by a row of fine trees, with a beautiful view of Ararat to the south, and not far from it stands the old church of S. Rhipsime, which is said to have been erected by Tiridates himself. In the course of our stay we were honoured by a brief audience with the Catholicos, the ecclesiastical head of the Armenians. Megerditch Khrimian is an old man of very striking appearance, considerably above the average height, with a long flowing black beard and large handsome dark eyes. He evinced great curiosity to hear the opinions generally held in England on the questions vitally affecting his countrymen, but vouchsafed little indication of his own, unless by his frequent quotations of Mr. Bryce and Canon MacColl he intended us to infer that he could not improve upon their views and suggestions. His reticence was no doubt largely due to the peculiar relations existing between himself and the Government, who regard him with suspicion as being identified with the policy of the Conservative or Anglophile party.

The exiles in Russia, it must be explained, are divided as regards their attitude towards the State into two distinct classes. The Anglophiles, on the one hand, resenting the restrictions already placed upon their educational system, and clinging to the idea of a possible union of their nation at some future date, look to England as the representative of generous and enlightened views; while the Russophile or Liberal party, believing that this is, for the present, an impracticable dream, and that Russia alone has the power to release their co-religionists across the border from Turkish tyranny and misrule, are rather disposed to make the best terms they can with the powers that be. That these two sections unite in a bitter complaint of the treatment to which they are subjected, and that, remaining as isolated from the other nationalities of Trans-Caucasia as the Russians themselves, they constitute a standing protest against the centralised system which can only coerce but cannot absorb, are reasons which most strongly confirm the authorities in their antagonism to the application of any measures of reform in Asia Minor which may create the germ of an independent kingdom or give a fresh impetus to the activity of the revolutionary party. Very little effort has been made to reconcile them to the order under which they live. They are there on sufferance,

and no care is taken to disguise the fact. Exposed for centuries in Turkey to official rapacity and Kurdish depredation, they at least enjoyed until lately a fair measure of religious toleration; but those who fled or succeeded in fulfilling the onerous conditions imposed on emigrants have found themselves subjected in their new home to an interference and control more arbitrary and vexatious than before. At first a considerable latitude was allowed, and though in theory their education was supposed to be confined to the inculcation of morals and religion, a broader training was in fact received by all who passed through the five classes of the elementary schools to the diocesan seminaries.

But this indulgence was materially curtailed thirteen years ago by an Imperial ukase, which not only insisted on Russian being taught, but required that in all but the most elementary schools—that is in all schools of more than one standard—the teaching must be conveyed in the same language. Further, except in the case of the seminaries which correspond to our theological colleges for the candidates for holy orders, the Government asserts its right to supervise and control the whole curriculum, and to dismiss without the consent of the ecclesiastical authorities any teacher to whom they may take exception. We were assured at Echmiadzin that

these regulations had resulted in the closing of no less than nine hundred schools; and however natural may appear the desire to break down the barrier of language, it is an advantage which in most countries would be thought too dearly purchased at the cost of all higher education.

This is but one instance of an encroachment on the powers of the hierarchy, particularly galling to a people accustomed to regard the latter as the visible embodiment of their national aspirations. Another, to which they are even more sensitive, is the direct veto exercised by the Czar over the appointment of the Catholicos himself. When the chair falls vacant the choice of a successor is vested in the representatives sent by the different dioceses in Turkey, Russia, and Persia—two from each—to the conference at Echmiadzin. From the four candidates approved by the synod two are chosen by a second election, and the final decision rests with the Emperor, whose consent is a necessary preliminary to the confirmation and consecration of the new dignitary.

In the Armenian Church not only is the highest rank open in theory to others than the Episcopate, but it is not even a condition precedent to its attainment that the candidate should have received ordination at all. It has

occurred once at least, and probably oftener, in the history of the patriarchate that its representative has been chosen from the ranks of the laymen. The service, with its accessories of lights and incense, approximates more nearly to the Roman than to the Greek forms, for the liturgy includes intercessions to the Virgin and the Saints on behalf of the living, as well as prayers and masses for the dead. On the other hand, in matters of doctrine the case is rather reversed, for the Armenians accept the Eastern definition with regard to the Procession, while they reject the dogmas of Purgatory and Papal infallibility. The passion for metaphysical speculation which exerts so strong a sway over the Oriental mind has involved them, like the Nestorians, in formal heresy; but it may charitably be doubted whether they really attach to their own position a meaning as unorthodox as that which has generally been attributed to them. Their most fatal curse—that which has rendered them an easy prey to their enemies from the fifth century onwards—has been their inveterate tendency to religious and sectarian animosities. Their hatred of foreign domination is only excelled by the jealousy with which the Gregorian looks upon the Protestant, and both upon the Roman Catholic; and it is impossible to overrate the obligation which rests on those whose missionary zeal or philanthropic

interest impels them to labour for the welfare of this downtrodden and unhappy people, that they should strive to rise above the level of a narrow proselytism, alas! only too common, and to inculcate in their protégés that broader and more Christian spirit which will alone enable them to close their ranks in the presence of a common foe.

The only other guest besides ourselves at the dinner, which was spread in a long spacious refectory on the ground-floor, was a Persian who had lately acted as consul for his Government in Van. The successful exertions he made there to protect a number of Armenians during the massacres had led to protests from the Porte, in consequence of which he had been recalled and was now on his way home. As we came out of the refectory we discovered our late driver in a condition of hopeless intoxication in the courtyard. Claiming a payment preposterously in excess of the sum originally agreed upon, he became so violent that the Superior of the monastery insisted on our depositing the money with him, undertaking to settle the matter as soon as the fumes of the vodka had passed off. How long that process eventually took we never ascertained, for when we entered the post-cart next morning our friend, more tipsy than ever, clambered

on to the step and remained there chattering and gesticulating until we knocked him off.

The great mountain was for once free of its cloud-cap, and we drove at an exhilarating pace across the plain, covered with coarse grass and tall reeds and dotted with black Kurdish tents, to the station at Makara. Here we were obliged to leave our luggage, as there were no 'troikas' available at the moment, and to wait for its arrival a few miles further on at the Tartar village of Igdir. The Russian officers, who have the first claim on the postal service, had already bespoken all the vehicles, and it was some hours before we succeeded in hiring a private one in the bazaar to take us to Orgoff, the last frontier post.

The road was a bad one, scarcely more than a rough track over the boulders left by the lava streams round the base of the mountain, and on reaching the guard-house the officer in charge informed us that our passports ought to have been viséd at Erivan. Having despatched an orderly for the purpose, he civilly expressed his regret that he had no accommodation to offer us, but said that we could put up at the house of Ali Bey, son of Abdul Hamid, the chief of a Kurdish tribe which occupied the small village close by. Our arrival created a great stir, and a number of visitors

dropped in during the evening to take stock of our appearance and examine our guns and rifles. They were tall wiry men—some of them decidedly handsome—with pale oval faces, bushy eyebrows, and trim black moustaches, and they wore over their baggy knickerbockers long grey overcoats confined by cartridge-belts of niello work at the waist. These Shemshî Dinouf—the Sons of Light—enjoy a more favourable position than do their relatives on the Turkish side. The Russian Government allots to them during the summer months certain pasture-lands for the grazing of their flocks, in return for which a tax of ten roubles is exacted for every household. Across the border the Kurds own their own pasture-lands, but have to pay for the privilege a sum of four piastres per head of sheep. The raids which invariably accompany the annual migration of a tribe in Turkey are of course repressed with a stern hand in Russia; but the instinct for plunder, albeit confined to a narrower scope, is by no means extinguished, as we soon discovered to our cost.

We were on the point of starting next morning, when we found that a couple of riding-boots were missing, as well as two pistols, which could only have been extracted by our hosts from the saddlebags beside us during the night, or by the rabble which had collected

to watch the lading of the caravan. Expostulations were of course only met by a complete disavowal of any knowledge of the theft, but as it was not impossible that we had been purposely disarmed as a preliminary to robbing us more efficiently as soon as we were beyond the limits of Russian authority, we thought it as well to acquaint the officers with what had happened. They explained to Ali Bey that he must accompany us, and would be held responsible by them for our safety, and then we set off for a small Kurdish encampment, whither orders for a fresh relay of horses had been sent the night before. The animals, however, were roaming loose over the hill when we arrived, and two hours were spent in vain attempts to lasso them, an interval which we employed in eating our lunch and photographing the women at the doors of their mud-burrows. Tall and well proportioned, with coarse black hair, they wear no veils, but generally conceal their mouths with a handkerchief in the presence of strangers. A few are good-looking, but the features are often rather uncouth and savage in expression.

At last the horses were caught, but there were not enough to take all the baggage, and we were obliged to make shift with the oxen. Our progress was consequently very slow, and frequent halts had to be called

in order to readjust the loads, which were continually slipping off their backs. The women dissolved in tears, believing that their husbands, once past the frontier, would never be allowed to return to them. Laboriously we crawled down the stony southern slopes, and were astonished on nearing Karabulak by the sight of a regiment of infantry drawn up to salute us. Special orders had been sent by the governor that everything should be done to facilitate our journey, and no difficulties were raised at the customs-house, where, as we discussed the inevitable coffee and cigarettes, the colonel invited us to taste the men's rations of pilaf and lentils, and to inspect the carefully kept register of accounts, that we might report satisfactorily to his superior at Bayazid. Fresh mounts were placed at our disposal, and we cantered across the plain, now misty in the gathering twilight—a great sheet of water, fringed with rushes and alive with wildfowl, lying between us and Ararat, over which the snow-clouds were rapidly descending.

Few, probably, who have seen the celebrated mountain, have not also felt a wish to scale its summit, and to stand on the spot from which the fathers of our race went forth to repeople the earth. But in our case the lateness of the year put it out of the question to

gratify such a desire. The attempt had been made a few days before by a small party, and had resulted in the death of one of their number, who had missed his footing during the descent, and, fracturing his leg by the fall, had died of exposure before his companions noticed his absence and went back to search for him. The ascent, even if practicable, is not worth undertaking after the month of August, because the clouds, which scarcely ever lift from the peak, would effectually shut out the splendid view which Mr. Bryce has so graphically described. Under favourable circumstances it presents no great difficulty, although the natives believe that it is impossible, and the climber must be prepared to rely on his own resources. The local prejudice, and the incredulity with which the assertion that the feat has been accomplished is always received, has its root in a superstition which is shared by Christians and Mussulmans alike, and is well illustrated by a story which Mr. Chambers told me of the explanation vouchsafed to him by an Armenian priest at Uch Kilisse, on the road between Erzerum and Bayazid. 'Ararat,' he said, 'is the birthplace of mankind, and we know, on the authority of our Saviour's own words to Nicodemus, that a man cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born.' A poetic adapta-

BAYEZID.



tion of Scripture which, like so many others of its kind, would be more convincing if the quotation were borne out by the text !

On our way we met a deaf and dumb Kurd who, recognising Ali, rushed up and kissed his hand with the most abject demonstration of loyalty and affection. The same marks of profound respect were evinced by the scattered parties of mounted Kurds that passed us, one of which stopped to inquire whether we were rich, but were informed by our noble guide that, rich or no, we were not legitimate prey. Darkness had closed in ere we commenced the ascent of a steep ravine and saw ahead of us the lights of Bayazid. Presently a few figures appeared carrying an enormous lantern, and conducted us to a low wooden mess-room, where Djebbar Bey, the governor, dressed in the full uniform of a Circassian officer, with a plentiful sprinkling of Servian medals, was awaiting our arrival with two or three Persian guests to begin his dinner.

CHAPTER VI

BAYAZID TO VAN

EARLY next morning he called at the house which he had kindly placed at our disposal, accompanied by an Armenian priest, with whom he appeared to be on the best of terms. We were strolling outside when he arrived, and in the course of our conversation with him a dervish came by and asked for alms. So extraordinary was his appearance that, despite the half-remonstrance of the governor, we expressed a desire to photograph him. To our surprise he made no objection, and shaking down his long matted hair over his shoulders, while he jerked his head backwards and forwards with extraordinary rapidity, he thrust a dagger clean through both cheeks till the blood ran down.

Two fine thoroughbred horses had been lent us for a visit to the old castle, close to which there is a rock-panel containing a much injured Assyrian sculpture. Behind it rises a line of sheer cliffs of bluish-green slate, and a little to the west, on an elevated platform, stand the noble remains of the old palace built by a Persian



DERVISH AT BAYEZID

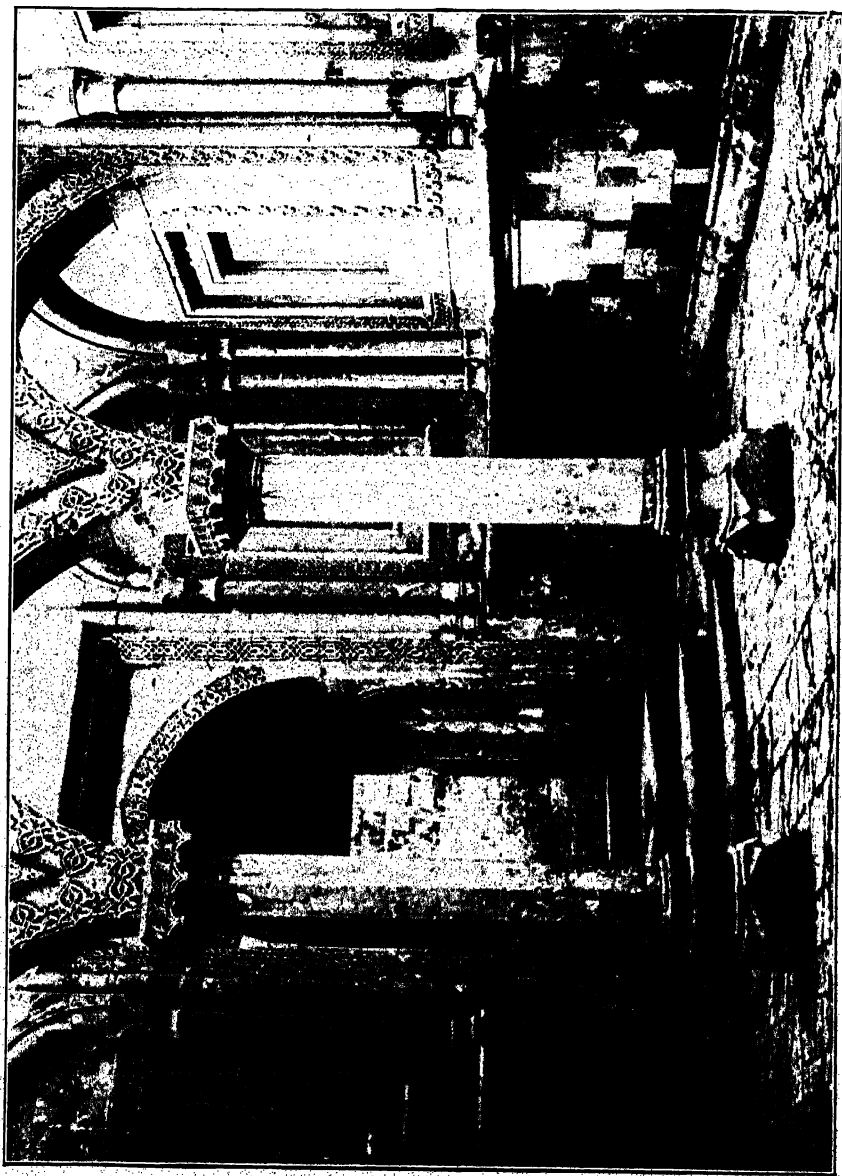
' He forced a dagger clean through both cheeks till the blood ran down '

architect, and now used as a barrack for the troops. The average garrison consists of between three and four battalions, and a number of these were still in camp in spite of the growing discomfort caused by the setting in of the cold season. The men were drawn up in line as we passed through the splendid archway, which leads into three courts opening out of one another. The first is plain, but the other two are adorned with the richest carving, and there are portions of the third and smallest, which in their way are as beautiful as anything which can be found in the fairy courts of either the Alhambra or the Alcazar of Seville. We were also shown the quarters occupied by the soldiers, and the rifles supplied to them, which appear to be all of the Mauser pattern. It is to be hoped that the Government may take steps to arrest any further deterioration of this splendid building, which, except in the upper portion of the walls, has suffered surprisingly little from the effects of repeated sieges¹ and earthquakes, and is unquestionably one of the finest monuments in the country. The political condition of the town is for the moment satisfactory, and will probably remain so as long as the present governor is retained at his post, as he is

¹ Bayazid was captured by the Russians in the war of 1828, and restored to Turkey in the treaty of Adrianople

a man of enlightened views, and while his influence is paramount the Armenians are reasonably secure against a massacre. It was at their petition that his bigoted predecessor was removed and an outbreak thereby prevented, but the policy of dissociating the civil administration from the control of the military must seriously incapacitate him for dealing with an emergency. That his good intentions were greater than his power of carrying them into effect may be judged from the transparent reason he gave for not enforcing the disarmament of the civil population, which in theory ought to be applied to all the Sultan's subjects, Moslem as well as Christian. He told us that, while most anxious to execute this reform, he was deterred from doing so by the standing menace of a Persian invasion—an excuse which, ridiculous as it must appear to any one who has seen the troops of the Shah, constituted a wholly unjustifiable reflection on the efficiency of the large force at the disposal of the commandant of the garrison.

Between Bayazid and Van lies a bleak tract bordering on Persian territory, and peopled for the most part by Haideranli Kurds and Armenian peasants living in scattered hamlets. The two Governments exercise but a desultory control over their respective spheres and



COURTYARD OF PALACE, BAYEZID

predatory incursions are consequently of frequent occurrence. The prestige of our friend Ali Bey was considered an insufficient protection so far from his usual haunts, and another Kurd, a captain in the Hamidieh, was deputed to accompany us. From a grassy crest above the Persian village of Jemel Karun we obtained a glorious view of the Russian ranges to the north, and a steady downpour of rain coming on at midday, we took refuge in a little hovel carpeted with some really beautiful specimens of modern Kurdish industry. On our departure a few of the villagers joined our motley party, which now contained representatives of no fewer than five nationalities—English, Kurds, Turks, Armenians, and Persians. To the right of the track rises a remarkable cone which, according to our guides, emits a constant and copious flow of lava. Be that as it may, the entire sides of the volcano are coated with the black deposit which, at one time or another, has been discharged in such volume that the valley below is completely choked with its masses, coiled and twisted into the most fantastic wreaths and pinnacles.

We rested for the night at Bayazid Agha, in an exceptionally spacious odagh belonging to a Kurd. Cold as the weather had now become, these stone huts

were always warm, for the outer air gains admittance only through the rickety door or through the few holes pierced in the walls, while the side fronting the entrance is often formed of nothing but the natural rocks and earth of the abutting hill. The roofs are built of rafters of wood supporting a layer of flat stones, over which a thick coating of mud is plastered and rolled level by means of heavy stone cylinders. The arrangement of the interior always follows the same plan—a long raised platform with a flooring of mud, on which the felt strips and bedding are laid, and connected with the beams overhead by a number of peeled poplar stems. On either side runs a wooden paling, which separates the family and the well-to-do visitors from the menagerie stabled behind it, and the pungent smoke from the dung fire finds a tardy exit through the same apertures, which provide for the ventilation of the apartment. An attempt on our part, which unfortunately failed, to photograph the scene by the aid of magnesium wire created the greatest excitement, and the headman of the village carried off a piece of the 'magic candle' to gratify the curiosity of his harem.

We spent the following morning in crossing and recrossing the fords of the Bende Mahi, a clear stream winding between banks of glossy green, and at noon

reached Pergri, the headquarters of a battalion and the residence of the Kaimakam. He received us in a kind of glorified bathroom, with a large tank in the centre and lounges running along the four sides, and during lunch regaled us with the most impossible stories of flying-machines and other wonders invented by his friends in Constantinople, and destined before long to eclipse the discoveries of Europe.

The afternoon ride lay over a plain ten miles long, on which a number of large bustard were feeding. Here we caught the first glimpse of the Sippan Dagh, a large extinct volcano by the shore of the lake on whose summit the Ark is said to have struck before it finally grounded on Ararat. Entering Kordzot, we found the housetops literally thronged by Armenians, curious to know who the new arrivals were. They had some reason for anxiety, as many of their friends had perished in the disturbances which had prevailed over the whole region in the neighbourhood of Van, and the survivors were in a condition of pitiable destitution. The Kurds had pillaged them of everything they possessed, leaving them nothing but the scanty rags on their backs and the bare walls of their dwellings. So thorough had been the loot, that not a carpet or shred of matting was to be seen in the rooms; and

when we asked for a board which might serve for a table, our host pleaded that he dared not produce the only one the village contained, lest the sight of even this modest possession might excite the cupidity of the Kurds, who had followed us from Pergri, and who were themselves the agents employed by the Government for the maintenance of order¹. A petition was drawn up, and presented to us, setting forth the grievances of the inhabitants; and the disastrous effect of the recent anarchy on the value of property in the district may be appreciated from the fact that in Kordzot the tithes which, twelve months before, had been sold for £800 fetched this year only £200, and even at that price resulted in a dead loss to the farmer. Nor was this an exceptional instance. Other villages had suffered quite as severely, and so insatiable and merciless had been the greed of the spoilers, that, having swept up the grain stores, the cattle, and even the farming implements of the Christian peasantry, they actually deprived them of the hoards of walnuts which were subsequently collected as a last resort against starvation during the rigours of the approaching winter. If it had not been for the lavish funds sent out from England and America, which have been expended in buying bread, seed, and cattle, branded with the con-

sular mark as the most effective safeguard against their being stolen from the recipients, it may safely be said that famine would long ago have completed the extermination of the survivors from the massacre.

We left Kordzot at dawn, the snow-hills behind us flushing rosy red in the sunrise, and after a stiff climb, followed by a sharp descent past several Kurdish settlements, in the course of which we disturbed a large flock of ruddy sheldrake in splendid plumage, crossed a small plateau and came down upon Lake Archag. Like the neighbouring sea of Van its waters are strongly impregnated with salt, and their level is subject to sudden and considerable variation. A Kurdish farmer at Arbishat, at the western corner of the lake, told us that a few months back a rise of no less than four hundred feet had completely submerged a large portion of his crops, and though this was obviously an exaggeration, an extensive area of cultivated ground from which the water had only recently receded was covered with the white deposit. The most impressive feature of Archag is the dark and naked precipice of the Varak Dagħ that overhangs its southern shore, now mirrored in the clear blue surface, now towering in lone grandeur above the cloud-folds of a sudden storm. The usual road along the beach was still flooded, and

we had to follow a slippery footpath higher up. It was nearly dark before the citadel of Van loomed up in front of us, a black outline against the hazy expanse of ripples; and after threading an apparently endless maze of sordid streets, shut in by high mud walls, and presenting lamentable evidences of the havoc caused by the year's excesses in many a bullet-riddled and deserted house, we gained the luxuriant poplar gardens that surround the British consulate. Here we received a cordial welcome from Mr. Elliot, and were agreeably surprised to find a fellow-guest in Mr. Browne, the able and devoted representative of the Archbishop's Mission to the Nestorians of Tiari, whose country we were about to visit.

The history of Van is a chequered one, and no trace of its origin survives, except in the legend which ascribes its foundation to the mythical Semiramis. By the middle of the eighth century before Christ the old Mongol race, whose territories—the 'Matiene'¹ of Herodotus—stretched as far westward as the borders of Phrygia, and were ruled by a stock supposed by

¹ The exact limits of the country are very indefinitely described. The historian, quoting from the map of Aristagoras (E § 50), makes it contiguous with Armenia, divided from the Phrygian country by the Halys (A § 72), and watered by four rivers, viz the Tigris, two others of the same name rising from the mountains of Armenia and Matiene respectively, and a fourth, the Gyndes, which, after its junction with the Tigris, debouches into the Red Sea (Persian Gulf). (A § 189, E § 52)

some to have been allied to the Sumerians of Chaldea, had been already subjected by Aryan immigrants from the Caucasus, and Van became the capital of a kingdom called by the Assyrians Urardhu, and by its native population Biainas. The peculiar cuneiform script in which the national records were embodied is said to have been introduced by Sarduris I (833 B.C.), and during the two hundred and fifty years which may be taken as a rough estimate of the duration of his dynasty, the country was involved in a series of struggles with the empire of Assyria. Thus we hear of hostilities between one of his successors, Argistis, in 800 B.C., and Rimmonnirari III., while the city was beleaguered in 735 B.C. by Tiglath Pileser II. A century later it fell a prey to the Persians, and on the south side of the precipice on which the citadel of Argistis was built may still be seen the famous tri-lingual inscription in which Xerxes commemorated his triumphs. A second overthrow, of which we have no record, necessitated its restoration in 149 B.C. by Vagarshag, the first of the Arsacid kings of Armenia, and it continued under the rule of his successors until its capture in the fourth century by Sapor II. During the six hundred years which followed, it enjoyed a position of autonomy subject to the suzerainty first of the Sassanians and then of the Arabs, when it regained

its independence for a century under the Arsrunik Armenians. It was handed over by the last of the royal line to the Byzantine Emperor, Basil II., but was taken by the Seljuks in 1050, after which, with a brief interlude of Persian supremacy following on its conquest by Timur, it passed in the middle of the sixteenth century to the Osmanli Turks, under whose authority it has remained ever since.

It is to its wonderful surroundings that Van owes its peculiar attraction, and a more enchanting panorama could scarcely be conceived than that which the traveller surveys from the rising ground behind the town. Of its buildings nothing can be seen except the castle, perched upon an isolated crag above the broad belt of poplars that stretches in an unbroken line five miles in length to the foot of Varak. Behind it the glittering lake, a tideless waste of waters, sweeps by creek and wooded island to where on the dim horizon rise the gigantic pyramids of the Sippan and the Nimrud Dag. To the sportsman and the fisherman it is a perfect paradise, for the fertile lands and marshes along the shores teem with large bustard and every species of wildfowl, bear and ibex abound on the cliffs and corries and among the oak copses to the east, and the streams of Shattak swarm with fine trout. The tops of the Kurdish hills, ranging from altitudes of ten

to fifteen thousand feet, were already white with snow, and as a heavier fall might block the passes to Kochanes, we were obliged to forego the pleasure of an extended stay. On the island of Akhtamar, the seat of an Armenian patriarch, there is an interesting tenth-century church which we had intended to visit, but the only boat available belonged to the Tobacco Régie, and they could not spare it for the excursion. We had therefore to content ourselves with seeing the two most interesting places in the immediate vicinity—one at Ak Keupri, two miles east of the town, where a large door-shaped panel cut in the rock is covered with a long cuneiform inscription which is rapidly becoming obliterated from exposure to the weather; and the other the curious church of Yedi Kilisse, some six miles beyond on the lower slopes of Varak. As its name implies, it contains seven tiny chapels, and three inscriptions of Minuas are built into the lintel and sides of the door. It had been completely dismantled and sacked by the Shemsiki Kurds a short time before our arrival, and the priests had abandoned it in consequence.

Appalling as the massacres have been in almost every part of the six Armenian vilayets, that of Van has suffered the most, because it is here that the Government has conspicuously failed to exercise any

real mastery over the Kurds, and that the revolutionary societies have been most energetic in the prosecution of their violent propaganda. Those who in England are loudest in their sympathy with the aspirations of a people 'rightly struggling to be free' can hardly have realised the atrocious methods of terrorism and blackmail by which a handful of desperadoes, as careful of their own safety as they are reckless of the lives of others, have too successfully coerced their unwilling compatriots into complicity with an utterly hopeless conspiracy. It has been proved beyond the possibility of refutation, it has been admitted by the authors themselves, that this agitation has been carried on by them not with any prospect of achieving their object by the means employed, but in the calculation that by provoking reprisals the European Powers would be compelled to interfere.

During the three years preceding the autumn of 1895, the Vali, Bahri Pasha, had allowed matters to take their own course. The villages round the lake had been repeatedly pillaged by marauding bands under the leadership of three notorious chiefs, Emin, Hussein, and Jemir, and the Kurds along the Persian frontier were known to be meditating an attack on Van, in revenge for the slaughter of seventeen of their com-

rades by Armenian revolutionaries at Serai the winter before. In the city the agents of the Huntchak and Tashnak committees—most of them naturalised Russian subjects—working under directions from Tiflis, were busy maturing their plans for a rising, and not content with extorting pecuniary support under threat of murder, they proceeded to assassinate one of their own bishops who had had the courage to denounce their treasonable schemes. The Catholicos, an utterly incompetent man, who exercised no influence either with his own people or with the Government, died early in the spring of 1896, and the remaining priests were either powerless or too terrified to adopt any measures to avert the catastrophe which the rising fears of the Mussulman population had now rendered inevitable. A shot fired at one of the Turkish sentry who had challenged a party of the rebels gave the excuse for a general massacre, which lasted from the 15th to the 17th of June; and it was mainly due to the great pluck and promptitude displayed by H.M. Consul, Major Williams, who afforded an asylum to thousands of the Armenians within the precincts of the consulate, that the number of victims was not more than four hundred.

Meanwhile the whole country was in a state of anarchy. The Kurds on the Turkish side of the

frontier marched down and besieged the town, where some two hundred of the insurgents, hoping for reinforcements from Persia, maintained a last stand in the gardens, and the Shikkak Kurds seized the opportunity to make a raid upon Bashkala from Salmas. At last, after a long parley, in which the consul mediated between the rebels and the executive, some degree of order was temporarily restored. The Kurds were induced to disperse. A small body of the Armenians who attempted to force their way through to the border were intercepted and cut down, while a few of the ringleaders who refused to trust the assurances of the Vali, or hoped to revive the insurrection on a more auspicious occasion, remained in hiding on the outskirts of the town, and were still lurking there at the time of our visit.

But the secret societies in Russia and Europe were not satisfied with the mischief they had already done; and perceiving that the outbreak of war between Greece and Turkey had diverted the attention of the Powers from the Armenian question, they determined at all hazards to bring it once more to the front.

In July 1897 a band of between two and three hundred Armenian nationalists, who had stealthily mustered at Salmas, and were armed with Russian

rifles and provided with passports viséd in the Caucasus, made a sudden dash across the border, attacked the camp of Sherif Beg, a Hamidieh Kurd, at Bashkala, and after killing over a hundred of his men, retreated with a total of less than twenty casualties on their own side. The exasperated officer, collecting a mixed rabble of Mersiki and Shemsiki Kurds, retaliated in the following month by a descent upon several of the Persian villages near Khoi, where, in addition to other acts of barbarity, he butchered about two hundred Armenian peasants, most of whom were probably altogether guiltless of any connivance with the previous raid. For this exploit he was promptly promoted by the Turkish Government, and indignant protests were addressed to the Persian authorities for having allowed a hostile expedition to be organised in their own territory. By this time they were probably becoming thoroughly alarmed on their own account, for the frontier question has long been a fruitful source of dispute between the two countries, and, under sufficient provocation, the Turks may show as little respect for the settlement arrived at under the Berlin Treaty as they did for the decision of the Anglo-Russian Delimitation Commission, when they seized Kotur at the time of the Crimean War.

Troops were therefore despatched at once to the scene of the disturbance, and many genuine or supposed revolutionaries were arrested, some to be handed over to the Russians and released without any inquiry, others, who had no means of bribing the officials, to be tried and sentenced by the courts at Bashkala. Since then there has been no renewal of disorder, but neither is there the slightest guarantee against its recurrence at any moment. The Armenians are certain to return if they see a prospect of successful agitation, and the presence of the troops, even if they could be kept permanently on the spot, is in itself an intolerable burden on the villages in which they are quartered. The British consul at Tabriz cannot possibly supervise a district so remote from his headquarters, and the Russian Government, which must be held responsible in a large measure for what has already occurred, since they might easily have prevented the departure of notorious agitators and the wholesale smuggling of weapons from the Caucasus had they chosen to do so, have recently compelled the Sultan to readmit into his territory the very refugees whose presence they will not tolerate in their own.

It will be almost a miracle if the return of these exiles, and their reinstatement in villages now occu-

pied by the Kurds, does not lead to a revival of the fanaticism which has been gradually subsiding, and fatally retard the energetic prosecution of measures which the Government might otherwise have undertaken with a view to bringing the tribes more effectually under their control. But a fresh outbreak, should it occur, will probably be attributable rather to the resentment of the Mussulman population, than to the instigation of the authorities, who have every motive to restrain disorder so far as they can, unless they believe themselves to be confronted by widespread revolutionary intrigue.

One step England can take on her own initiative, which, without affording any legitimate ground of complaint to other Powers, will powerfully further the cause she has at heart, and assist Turkey to cope with difficulties which Russia is certainly not doing anything to diminish. Let her place a military officer as consul or vice-consul at Urumiah with instructions to keep an eye on the frontier and report immediately on the arrival of suspicious characters in that region—and the most dangerous and standing menace to the peace of the Van vilayet will be removed.

Be our private sympathies what they may, we can adopt no course more friendly both to the Turkish

Government and to the Armenians, than emphatically to dissociate our advocacy of reform from the least appearance of condoning any treasonable schemes for its attainment

In view of the facts just related, few will deny that the authorities at Van had at least plausible grounds for regarding the situation as sufficiently serious to warrant their adopting measures of a stringent character to meet it. The remedy actually applied in this as in every other case was one of needless severity and brutality, but strange, almost incredible, as it may appear, there can be little doubt, that in regard to the Armenian provinces generally, the Government did genuinely believe themselves face to face with a carefully planned design for a simultaneous rising, which might constitute a grave danger if it was not nipped in the bud. Every precaution was taken, a house to house search was made, and any arms or ammunition that were found were at once seized. The slaughter which followed was deliberately organised, the signal for its commencement was in several instances given by the officers of the troops, who themselves took an active part in the butchery, and the governor or military commandant, as the case might be, contrived by reassuring the Armenians and

inducing them to carry on their business in the bazaars as usual, that it should be as thorough as possible. But mere wanton cruelty was not the motive. It was political, not religious, a measure of repression, not of extermination.

No one knows better than the Turk that his own prosperity is largely identified with that of the industrious Armenian, and though he hates and despises him as much as he does the Greek, and more than he does the Jew,¹ so far from desiring to be rid of him he takes the greatest care to prevent his leaving the country. Passports are only granted to applicants who own land or house property to the value of fifty Turkish liras, and can pay the fee of sixty piastres which is necessary to legalise their signature to the written guarantee. Many of the richer merchants have complied with these conditions, others have evaded them. The village of Ardjisch, for instance, on the north has been completely abandoned by its Christian inhabitants, who have crossed into Russia, while their place has been taken by the Kurds; and Mr. Lynch, writing in July 1894, stated that during the

¹ If Careri is to be trusted, this was not always the case. Speaking of the 'haratch,' the tax of five dollars per head which was paid 'by every Christian except Franks and every Jew residing in the Levant,' he adds, 'But the Armenians pay less than the Jews.'

preceding year 3500 passports had been registered for emigrants from Turkey by the Russian consulate in Erzerum.¹ But escape is next to impossible for the average peasant, who would thereby lose all that he has, and, provided he could obtain decent security for life and property, he would prefer the comparative religious freedom which he enjoys in Turkey to the harassing conditions to which he has to submit in the territory of the Czar. The very complaints so often made by the Armenians themselves of the enormous sums of money lost by them during the disturbances, although doubtless exaggerated, with a view to enhancing their claims for compensation, prove that they enjoyed a considerable degree of prosperity under the normal conditions of Turkish rule. Apart from the illegal methods of extortion and the widespread corruption, which is the bane both of Ottoman and Persian administration, and against which no Sultan has yet set his face as, to his great credit, Mozaffin ed Din has done since his accession to the throne, there are probably few countries in which the burden of taxation presses so lightly on all classes as in the Turkish empire. The land-tax is only one-tenth of that imposed on our Indian subjects in the permanently settled districts of Bengal, Madras, and

¹ *Contemporary Review*, July 1894

the north-west provinces, while the taxes on sheep and cattle are assessed at a lower rate than in some of the Balkan principalities¹ It is the Bedel Askeri, or war-tax, of two medjidieh per annum, enforced upon all Christians in lieu of military service, which, although not unreasonable in principle, is most readily made the instrument of oppression. It is levied not merely upon adults, but upon every male from the date of birth up to the age of seventy, and as the produce of the tax has been returned in the official accounts of some of the vilayets, in which a large percentage of the non-Moslem population has been wiped out by massacre, at the same figure at which it stood before the disturbances, it follows that either the accounts have been deliberately falsified, or else the survivors have been mercilessly 'squeezed' to obviate what would otherwise have been a considerable deficit in the revenue.

The extent of fanatical intolerance among the Moslems of Asia has been enormously exaggerated. A feeling of bigotry there undoubtedly is, and it can always be excited to frenzy under a belief that Islam is threatened. But the spirit of persecution is ordinarily dormant in the masses, and it may be assumed that, where out-

¹ The land-tax is 4 per 1000. The taxes on cattle and sheep are: for camels and buffaloes, 10 piastres (about 2s 1d), for sheep, 4 piastres; for goats, 3½ piastres.

breaks occur, the impulse has been given by the mullahs, acting, it may be, on instructions from the capital, for a definite object—or else they have been occasioned by some act of folly on the part of those against whom they are directed. Accordingly they are practically confined to those provinces in which the Armenians are sufficiently numerous to be reckoned as a political force. At Mosul the Mohammedans were heard to say that they could not raise their hand against those who, in many instances, had been their own foster-parents; and it is a significant fact that, in towns like Urfah, which have an important Syrian element, no Christian who was not an Armenian suffered any molestation whatever. Race hatred and the desire for plunder have been more powerful incentives than any differences of creed, and not a few have found the destruction of their creditors the easiest mode of wiping out the score of financial embarrassment.

For the present the danger to life is over, but the attacks on property continue unchecked. Bad as the tithe-farming system is, venal as are the judicial tribunals, the Armenian could put up with the rapacity of the official and the exactions of the police, as he has put up with them for centuries, if only he was protected from the constant depredations of the Kurds, who descend like the locusts of the Apocalypse to destroy all that the

hail and the fire have spared. Unfortunately for all concerned, the Government is now reaping the inevitable fruits of its own cunning, in the impunity with which its authority is defied by those whom it has employed as its tools. Haunted by the fear of a possible combination between the race it has oppressed and the intractable clans whose independence it has menaced, too jealous of the progressive spirit of the Armenian to conciliate his loyalty by reasonable concessions, and shrinking from the strain which an attempt effectually to reduce the Kurds in their mountain fastnesses would entail on an already depleted treasury and a discontented soldiery, it has fallen back on the device of satiating the lawlessness of the one by abandoning to them the plunder of the other. 'Do not openly repudiate our authority, and we will allow you to deal as you please with the Christians' Such is in effect the tacit compact which has intensified the native arrogance of the tribesmen, and interposed a well-nigh insuperable barrier to the demands of Europe for reform.

In the earlier days of the Empire an attempt was made to curb these unruly Highlanders by transplanting them, on the Assyrian plan, from one district to another, and thrusting them as a wedge into the centre of an alien population. With this object, as far back as the

reign of Sultan Selim, the Haideranlı were brought from the southern Taurus and the neighbourhood of Diarbekir and Mosul to the country north of Lake Van. Ten years ago the project was formed for the first time of organising them on a military basis, and this has since taken shape in the creation of the now famous regiments of Hamidieh cavalry. Whoever deserves the credit of initiating a scheme fraught with sinister possibilities of danger to the State, whether, as some think, the minister, Izzet Bey, or, as others affirm, the present commander of the Fourth Army Corps, Zeki Pasha, the latter has been mainly, if not exclusively, responsible for its development. Connected by family ties with the Sultan himself, and enjoying, in addition to the influence of the harem, the advantages of considerable wealth, he has secured a free hand for the execution of his own designs, and established a respect for his authority which might well inspire his master with misgivings.

That a sovereign so jealous of his subordinates as Abdul Hamid has shown himself to be should repose such unlimited confidence in this man is probably due to the consummate skill with which the minister has played on his fears, and induced him to credit the existence of widespread disaffection among a section of his subjects. Himself a fanatic, Zeki is believed by many

to have been the prime mover in the recent disturbances, and the better to carry out his aims, he has succeeded in depriving the governors of the surrounding vilayets of all control over the troops, whose commanders now take their orders from him alone. The consequences may easily be imagined. The Kurd or nomad Arab who fastens the regimental insignia on his cap or in the twisted rope that circles the kefiyeh, exchanges a precarious independence for a life of licensed ruffianism, and, exempted nominally from certain forms of taxation, but in reality from all, commits what excesses he pleases and dares the civil authority to touch him. He has the right to be tried by court-martial at Erzingian, but the court never sits, and if it did, he knows that it would acquit him. The Valis may be excellent men, their appointment may be the triumphant issue of protracted consular protests and ambassadorial representations, but they are absolutely powerless, and if, chafing at their impotence, they offer to resign, the offer is declined.

There could not be a more convincing proof of the utter paralysis of the administration than the history of certain events which occurred not many months ago at Modeki, in the province of Bitlis. Exasperated by an attempt to count their sheep, as a preliminary to estimating the quota due from the village, the Kurds retaliated

by murdering the offending Kaimakam. On the receipt of the news, the Vali of Bitlis sent a colonel at the head of eighteen zaptiehs to exact reparation. They were attacked and shot down to a man. Unwilling to risk any more of his police, he surrendered at discretion and consented to treat with the mutineers. A long parley ensued, but at length the aghas pledged themselves to collect the taxes from their own people, and petitioned for another and more acceptable governor. In solemn state the members of the local council who had fled to Bitlis were escorted back by two companies of infantry, but on the borders of the Kaimakamlik were met by a warning from the Kurds to await the completion of further negotiations. They bowed to the inevitable, and it was not until the Vali had, by means of secret emissaries, overcome the recrudescient opposition, that another company was permitted to enter the village and instal the new deputy in his office. The only comment made by Zekı, when informed of the occurrence, was that a large force should have been sent at the outset; but the Vali acted, and could only act, on his instructions, and when the Kaimakam, who was subsequently murdered, told his men to fire on the Kurds, they deliberately refused to do so without express orders from the Mushir.

Nothing could be more suicidal than this reversion to the worst traditions of the old Janissary system of which Careri wrote in the seventeenth century, that although the agha was supposed to command a million of men, no correct estimate of their numbers could be formed, because 'so many persons to be tax-free endeavour to get themselves listed among them'—a system moreover which, as an engine of tyranny and oppression, proved more effectual than any act of official misgovernment in provoking the first outbreak of insurrection in the Balkans a century ago. The existence of such a privileged military caste might have been justifiable then, when it at least supplied a really splendid and efficient fighting force for the defence of the empire; but the undisciplined and insubordinate irregulars of to-day, while absolutely useless against troops properly led, trained, and equipped, are at all times a curse to the civil population, and might at any moment follow some local chieftain, as they followed Sheikh Obeidullah in 1880, in open revolt against the Government.

That the present régime might produce better results than the policy of bribing the Kurds to abstain from attacks on the Christians, against which the Powers presented a collective protest in 1880, provided it were honestly worked by a man of humane and statesmanlike

views, is possibly true. There have been instances in which a Kurdish tribe has spontaneously exerted itself to prevent oppression, as in a recent case in the Kharput vilayet, where a body of Ashirets marched down to the village of Uch Bey to protect its Armenian inmates from attack, and few stories are more romantic or pathetic than the sequel as narrated in the official correspondence. A month after these events had occurred, the whole tribe was intercepted and cut to pieces by a clan belonging to the Dersim. Among the victims was the chieftain Suleiman, and in the presence of many Armenian notables who had come to his funeral, the son of the dead man registered a solemn vow over the grave that he would follow in his father's footsteps. Parallel cases may be cited from most of the vilayets, and in that of Van Mortulla Beg, a Kurd of Menks, near Shattak, not only extended his protection to the Armenians during the crisis, but afterwards himself assisted in the task of distributing relief to the famishing population. Unhappily sympathy of this kind, instead of receiving encouragement, is regarded by the powers that be as a menace to themselves. Their one idea is summed up in the old motto 'Divide et impera,' and so long as that idea prevails, nothing short of foreign dictation will effect the slightest improvement.

Suggestions of trivial remedies, which do not deal with more than the fringe of the problem, and which, even when they are carried out, leave the real abuses untouched ; recommendations in favour of popular government utterly unsuited to and incompatible with Oriental conceptions , stipulations for the appointment of Christian moavins, who never can be anything but cyphers as regards the real management of affairs, while their nominal position only renders them a prominent mark for popular jealousy and dislike—these are all that have been offered by the Powers, and they are not only useless but positively mischievous. They confer no benefit on the oppressed, while they increase the resentment of the oppressor ; and the appointment of new batches of impecunious judges and commissioners by which the Porte seeks to attest its good faith, while in fact keeping matters as they are, only aggravates the worst evil of the situation by further impoverishing the already exhausted provinces. There is no question that the conditions precedent to any genuine amelioration of the existing régime are that the Powers should insist on some control over the appointment of the Valis, that these should have under their sole direction a properly equipped and regularly paid force of constabulary, and that irregulars should never be employed to quell disturbances.

But the zeal of most of the members of the Concert for the establishment of order in the dominions of the 'Sick Man' is at most a platonic one, and Russia has distinctly shown that she will oppose the only possible solution of the difficulty. She declares that, come what may, she will not have the Eastern question reopened, and unless it is reopened it is mere waste of breath to discuss the matter. Turkey will never set her own house in order except under coercion, and when that coercion is applied, as it will be some day by the Northern Colossus, it will be with a selfish object. Russia is only biding her time, and when the hour strikes she will come forward in her traditional character as the Protector of the Eastern Churches, the champion who has already fought two great wars to prove the sincerity of her sympathies. But she is not Quixotic, she has learned the lesson of the fifties and the seventies, and has no intention of risking her blood and treasure again for the emancipation of peoples who will show her no gratitude for her services, and who will only oppose an additional obstacle to the gratification of her incurable appetite for extension. At present her whole energies are bent on securing an outlet in the Far East, and she will not hamper herself by undertaking at the same time the settlement and administration of a new and peculiarly

turbulent province She can afford to wait. Turkey grows weaker every day, the Mussulmans more discontented, the Christians more reconciled to any change which offers them the slightest prospect of relief. Beyond Armenia lies the broad valley of the Rivers, which, in the hands of a civilised power, will blossom again as the garden of Eden—a source of untold wealth to its possessor, and an easy avenue to the Persian Gulf. England may fret and fume, but she has well-nigh abandoned all hope of checking the advance of her formidable antagonist, and if she meets her on any battle-field, it will be on the north-west frontier of India. So the statesmen of the Neva work out unhindered their dream of an empire that shall reach its giant arms from its seat in the frozen north through the dying nations of Islam and China to the shores of the Arabian and the Yellow Seas. When the moment arrives to take the last step towards its realisation, then, and not till then—unless events which none can foresee occur to hasten or to thwart her action—will Russia reap the fruit of that cold and calculating statesmanship which has allowed Armenia to become a charnel-house, rather than admit a foreign rival to divide with her a protectorate, however temporary and nominal, in the sphere which she has marked out for her own inheritance.

CHAPTER VII

KHOSHAB TO TKHOMA

It was on a lovely autumn afternoon that we started with Mr. Browne for Kochanes. The road, after a steep ascent, dipped through a valley capped by a superb line of snow peaks to the small Christian village of Archuk, where we rested for the night. A ride of a couple of hours next morning brought us to an old and picturesque bridge at the mouth of a small sandstone gorge, and following the course of the stream for some distance, we crossed a low ridge and came down upon Khoshab. The castle, perched on a beetling rock in the centre of the plain, backed by a long irregular range, whose glittering summits stood out in striking contrast to the dark and wintry sky, had been visible long before we reached it. The clear green of the water that washes its base and is spanned by three fine arches, the vivid gold and russet tints of the poplars along the banks, and the staring red and ashen hues of the bare tumuli that rise on all sides, do much to redeem the desolate character of the scenery. The 'Bride of Castles,' as it is commonly designated, has a finely

THE CASTLE, KHOSHAB



carved entrance-door surmounted by two heraldic lions, but is otherwise much dilapidated. The present building dates from the fifteenth century, and is alleged to be a restoration of an older edifice. Thirty years of incessant raids have materially reduced the population, which was formerly estimated at one thousand three hundred households within the walled enclosure

The present Kaimakam is a capable man, and owes his transference to Khoshab from his original post at Shemsdin solely to the courage with which he opposed the Kurdish agha Sheikh Sadiq, who murdered Mar Gauriel, the Nestorian bishop, a short time ago. The crime was a particularly cold-blooded one, and the attitude of the Government in regard to it was, to say the least of it, suspicious. The bishop had come with ten other Nestorians on a visit to the matran Mar Khnanishu, at Shemsdin, when the whole party were treacherously seized and put to death by the sheikh. The matran was saved from a similar fate by a rival Kurd, Moussa Beg of Khumaroo, who rescued him from Sadiq's clutches, and sent him secretly to Kochanes. As it was impossible that he should return to his own diocese, the Turkish Government undertook, after some delay, to send a guard to escort him in safety to Persia, but on the very day on which they

were to set out, it transpired that Sheikh Sadiq, having by some means received warning of their intention, was lying in wait on the road to intercept them. The matran therefore was obliged to remain as the guest of the Patriarch until Mr. Elliot found it possible to visit Kochanes, and took him back on his return journey as far as the frontier.

After lunching with the Kaimakam we rode on, passing on our right the Barshub Dag, 'the king of hills,' on which the setting sun glinted through the 'shadow streaks' of a heavy snowstorm, and turning up a small side glen found a lodging in the hamlet of Kasr. Thence the track, if it can be called one, crosses the Chukh Pass by a slippery ledge, and commands a fine view of Sippan and the crest of far-off Ararat. The cold was intense, and we were not sorry to thaw ourselves at a stove in the small khan on the top, before continuing our journey over the uninteresting plain which lay between us and Bashkala. An escort had been sent out to meet and accompany us the last half-mile to the village, where we were received by the governor, an old Seyyid in a green turban, with the members of his council. We were provided with a house to ourselves, and having discovered a katirji from Tkhoma, a Syrian wearing the

fascinating head-dress of his country, an extinguisher swathed in the gayest of rags, we engaged him to bring his animals to Qudshanis as soon as he had disposed of his wares. The village straggles up the lower incline of the hills, and possesses the scanty relics of an old castle, once, like Khoshab, the stronghold of an independent chief, Nur Ullah Beg, who murdered the traveller Schultz. We left it without any regret the next day, and rode down a steep nullah to the Zab (the traditional Pison of Genesis), when a heavy downpour decided us to leave the main road in order to pay a visit to Hipzillah Bey, the owner of the small Kurdish settlement of Omer Agha, and an old acquaintance of Mr. Browne's. A descendant of the old Mirs of Julamerk, he exhibited in a marked degree that appreciation of his responsibility to those among whom his family had lived for generations, which was the redeeming feature of the clan-system now rapidly becoming extinct. He had done his utmost, he said, to protect the surrounding districts from ill-treatment, but his efforts had been systematically thwarted by the Government. There had been scarcely any harvest, as the land had been left idle for want of security and means on the part of the cultivators, and we were told by a Nestorian priest whom

we met on the road, that the Shikkak Kurds had swooped down on his church at Huzi, and carried off everything they could lay their hands on, leaving him not so much as a single vessel in which to place the consecrated elements.

Before 1846, when the savage massacre of the Nestorians of Tkhoma by the Kurdish aghas, Bedr Khan Bey and Nur Ullah, aroused the indignant protests of the English Government, and forced the Turks, probably not much against their will, to undertake the annexation both of Tiari and Hakkiari, the whole country had been governed by hereditary chieftains, and even as late as 1888 Hakkiari was a vilayet by itself, governed by a Kurdish Pasha at Bashkala, with a subordinate Kaimakam and council at Julamerk. It is now incorporated in the vilayet of Van, and Julamerk has been raised to the status of a mutessariflik. This, in some respects, may have been an advisable change; but there are districts which enjoyed greater immunity from oppression under their own miras, who, however rough and ready their autocratic methods of dispensing justice, at least afforded protection to their own dependants.¹ It was curious

¹ According to Badger, Nur Ullah's predecessors, who paid a nominal tribute to the Pashas of Van and Mosul, were so far from oppressing the



ON THE PASS ABOVE JULAMERK



to observe the respect and deference which our host exacted from his household, allowing neither his servants nor his sons, two smart young fellows wearing splendid khanjas encased in antique and richly chased sheaths, to seat themselves in his presence; and when we took our leave, he sent a small bodyguard to see us on our way.

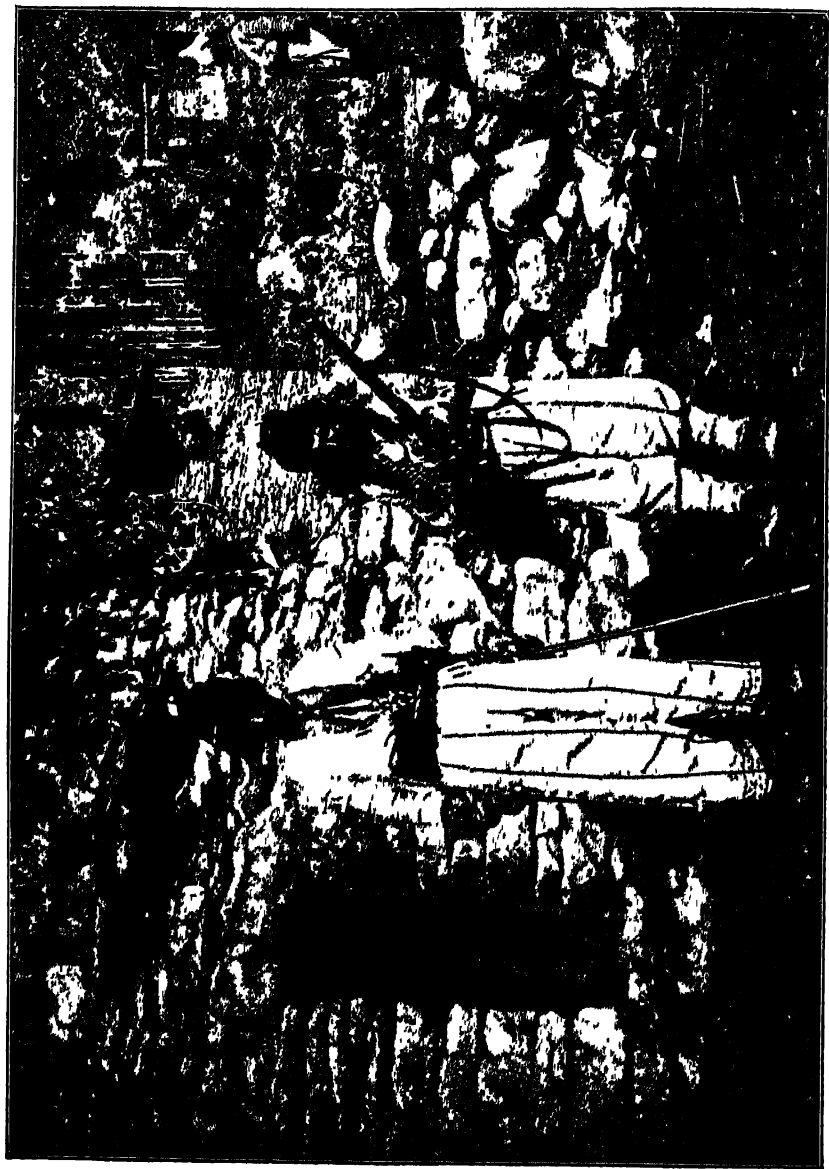
Winding along the reedy course of the Zab through a pretty glen, where the path becomes a narrow shelf on the face of the overhanging banks, we found ourselves at nightfall in a tiny group of cabins at Zeranî. Half excavated out of the hill-side, and nestling on the smooth sward of a green promontory surrounded by deep ravines and snowy tops, a narrow acreage of tilth supplies the scanty wants of its inhabitants. The dingy room into which we were ushered by a ragged crew was lit by spiral tapers of bee's-wax, and clouded with the dense smoke of a wood fire. Our bed-fellows were a horse, and a buffalo whose vulgarly noisy and prolonged munching of his evening meal compelled us, in the interests of slumber, to suggest to its owners

Nestorians, that they actually conceded to some of them the privileges of clanship, which freed them from taxation, and a voice in the election of the Mir of Hakkîarî, while in the event of a dispute between a Kurd and a Nestorian, the Patriarch and the Mir sat together to adjudicate upon the case

that they should limit the supply of its fodder. The cure, however, proved worse than the disease, for the outraged animal vented its displeasure in such continuous and unmusical protests that at length we were forced to an unconditional surrender.

At daybreak we left the river, in a steady drizzle of rain and sleet, and struck across the hills to the south-west. The descent into the valley, here barred by fine red walls of granite, was very slippery, and the mules found the greatest difficulty in keeping a foothold. At Kerni (Kurdish 'Kazan'), Mr. Browne received an ovation from the Nestorian peasants who, less fortunate than their neighbours of Tiari, are 'rayat,' subjects of the Sultan, and constantly raided by tribal forays. A rough ride over the pebbly bed of a stream, running up a lateral glen to the right, and fringed with a number of terebinth trees, brought us to the foot of the projecting alp, six thousand feet in height, and dominated by three imposing peaks, on the grassy summit of which stands the village of Kochanes. So steep is the incline, that half way up one of the mules put its foot on the corner of a sharp boulder, and after floundering in the deep mire for a second or two disappeared over the edge.

The whole community had turned out to meet us



NESTORIANS AT TKHOMA

and kiss our hands, headed by Mar Auram, cousin of Mar Shimun, with Benjamin the little patriarch-designate and his brother. A strange group they made, with their fair complexions and blue eyes, their raven hair falling over bare broad chests in long plaits from under the tall conical hats of white and black felt. Shamasha Noiyah (Deacon Noah), Mr. Browne's servant, an exceptionally fine specimen of the race, looks more like a bearded Assyrian just stepped out of the monuments than anything else, and the features of many of the Ashirets bear out their claim to Babylonian descent. The mountainous country to which the invasion of Tamerlane is supposed to have driven them is probably the 'land of Ararat,' to which Sennacherib's sons fled after the murder of their father, and it is by no means impossible that in these remote and natural fastnesses survive the scanty remnants of a once mighty and dominant people. Their dress is more original than artistic. A short jacket reaches to the waist, where the loose shirt is tucked into trousers abnormally roomy and confined by a girdle carrying a long dagger. Thick knitted socks of coarse and brilliant-coloured wool, and flat-soled felt shoes secured by strings to the ankle, complete their attire. The Catholicos himself, unluckily for us, was absent from

Kochanes, having gone at the instance of the mutessarif of Julamerk to collect the tribute for the Government from some of his own recalcitrant subjects at Diza. But his house is always open to guests, and we were presently installed in a large room roofed with walnut and decorated in the Persian style by an Armenian architect of Van. The design was Ishy's (Jesse), the father of Benjamin, who, to the intense grief of the family, had just died in the prime of life from a virulent attack of fever at Urmi. We took up our quarters, after divesting ourselves of our shoes, on a low-cushioned divan at the upper end of the apartment with Benjamin and his sister, Surma, a young lady of decided views, who, unknown to her people, had lately taken the veil by the simple method of surreptitiously inducing the matran of Shemsdin to allow her access to the Sanctuary. The rest of the company squatted down in a long line on each side with their legs tucked under them, except our zaptiehs, who were accommodated with chairs, in deference to the custom which gives precedence of all but the members of Mar Shimun's household to Turks and Europeans. After a brief conversation over tea and long rosewood pipes filled and lighted by the servants, the assembly dispersed and supper was brought on a

tray, without knives or forks, and laden with enormous folded napkins of bread to serve for plates. Pilaf in various forms—plain, boiled, and soaked in melted butter, with knobs of mutton and sliced chicken, or spiced and rolled in a covering of leaves—constituted the staple dish, with a dessert of splendid honey, yaourt, and clotted cream. Neither of our hosts might eat animal food, the boy in virtue of his prospective ecclesiastical office, and the girl in virtue of her vows of self-dedication. At the close of the repast water was fetched and poured over our hands from a ewer into a copper basin, and we betook ourselves again to coffee and pipes.

The house is a large one, and a fine studded door leads through an archway into the lofty passage paved with rough stone slabs. On the left are the guest-chamber, the rooms of Mar Shimun and Asiah (Asinath), Ishy's wife, and one in which Surma receives her education from a priest, whose chief occupation is copying old manuscripts with a reed pen and gall ink. On the right, at the far end, are the kitchen, lit by small openings in the roof, the rafters of which are black and shiny with the smoke of years, and the adjacent storeroom, of which the only occupants were two tame partridges of the 'giant' species, rarely met with out

of Kurdistan. The building stands at the edge of a sheer precipice, and near it is a watch-tower and the house of Petros, the steward, on whose narrow balcony, unprotected by any railing, the smallest children play unwatched. Beyond lies the straggling village on a broad grassy lawn intersected by fields of barley, and here Mr. Browne is building himself a new house as rapidly as official obstruction will allow him, for, notwithstanding it contains only a tiny oratory for himself and a small medical dispensary, the mutessarif of Julamerk accused him to the Vali of Mosul of the intention to build a church, and succeeded in delaying operations for some months. The cost is prodigious, because wood is scarce; a single tree costs a lira, and every large stone a halfpenny.

At the western extremity of the promontory, whence the deep rifts that enclose it on either side stretch away for many a league to the white spires of the great Jelu range, stands the little church of Mar Shalita on the verge of the cliff among a pleasant grove of poplars. A long ladder resting against its rock base provides the only means of access to the minute door, not more than half the height of an average man, which leads into the courtyard. Here, in a narrow cell, lived for many years the monk, visionary, and

miracle worker, Rabbat Yunan, and through another slightly bigger doorway to the left you pass barefooted into the sacred precincts. The entrances are made as small and difficult as possible, in order that the Kurds may not commit the profanity of stalling their cattle inside. The interior is lighted only by a single dim lamp, which hangs from the vaulted stone roof before the curtain of the sanctuary, where the Gospels are placed, and into which none may enter unless fasting. Partitioned off from it is a small room which serves as a vestry, and below are two lecterns, on which are laid the liturgies, and upon them crosses to be kissed by the worshippers. A stone flight of stairs in the wall leads up to a recess in which the communion bread is prepared—the Paschal bread, as the Nestorians believe, containing an admixture of the original leaven used at the Last Supper, and carried with him on his mission by St. Thomas, the founder of their church. The use of incense is sanctioned—an old bronze censer stands on a low truncated pillar in the nave—and the infants confirmed at baptism are allowed to communicate, receiving the wafer dipped in the wine, as often as their parents choose to bring them up. An exceptional interest necessarily attaches to this remote and almost isolated branch of the Church

Catholic, from the fact that, with the possible exception of the Abyssinian, it is the oldest in Christendom. Whether the tradition which attributes its inception to the Apostle and St. Adai, one of the Seventy, be believed or not, it is certain from the number of its missions scattered through Persia and the Far East¹ at a very early period, that its activity must have commenced long before that of the western churches. In the sixth century, no fewer than twenty-five metropolitan provinces acknowledged its Patriarch at Baghdad as their head. Originally it belonged to the patriarchate of Antioch, and was governed by a metropolitan residing at Seleucia Ctesephon; but after the Council of Ephesus in 431 it severed its connection with the west by embracing the doctrines of Nestorius, and set up a patriarchate of its own. The schism proved, as schism has always proved, but the prelude to internal disruption, and within two hundred years a disputed succession to the Catholicate brought about the division of parties now represented by the Christians of Kurdistan and north-west Persia on the one hand, and on the other those of the Mosul plains, who render obedience to

¹ The evidence of the existence of Nestorian missions in China rests mainly on the famous bi-lingual Chinese and Syriac inscription of the latter part of the eighth century A.D., excavated at the temple of Sian-fu in 1625.

Mar Elia, the patriarch of Babylon. Many of these have since become converts to Rome, and have been rechristened by her missionaries Chaldæans or Uniats.

The supreme office among those who have remained faithful to their old tenets was formerly filled by a candidate chosen by the tribes of Tiari and Tkhoma, but for the last three centuries it has devolved by common consent on one of the members of the Shimun family, and carries with it temporal as well as spiritual jurisdiction. The patriarch-designate must abstain from meat and matrimony, and his mother must also have complied with the former condition for some months before her delivery. As soon as he has received consecration from the matran he becomes the sole arbiter in matters ecclesiastical, deciding all points of controversy, exercising supervision over the matran and bishops, appointing the lay maliks or heads of villages, the sacristans and churchwardens, and receiving, in addition to the tribute which he passes on to the Government as their salaried representative, the offerings due from his subjects to himself. The most formidable power which he wields is that of excommunication, which, as it involves the boycott of the victim, soon compels his submission. The matran, Mar Khnanishu, lives at Shamsdin in the 'rayat' county, and technically

Kochanes itself is not Ashiret, though the Government consents to treat it as such. Five valleys fall under the same classification—Tiari, Tkhoma, Diz, Jelu, and Baz—and in these the armed and warlike tribes, the descendants of the fighting men of the old ‘*miras*,’ are generally free from oppression, except when lack of pasture compels them to drive their flocks further afield, and they fall a prey to the nomad Kurds during the autumn migration.

The principal offenders are the Uramar, the Artusha, and the Herki Kurds, and as they all move southward to Mosul for the winter, scarcely a year passes without their committing some act of depredation on the route. The Uramar live principally in the district from which they take their name, and in Upper Diz. The Herki, who are found on both sides of the frontier, have their ‘*yaila*’ or summer quarters in the neighbourhood of Marbishu, while the Artusha descend to the plains from the north-west through Bohtan or along the edge of Tiari. Were the Government to take the matter seriously in hand, they could put down this lawlessness easily enough—for a tribe, however numerous, will rarely encounter determined resistance if they can help it—a fact that was clearly demonstrated a year ago when a garrison of between ten and twenty soldiers proved

sufficient to protect the village of Liwan from a threatened attack. But too often it happens that the places most exposed are left without any sort of defence, or that the troops on the spot, if they do not actively co-operate themselves, at any rate connive in the perpetration of outrage. During a raid of the Shikkak Kurds upon Diz in the summer of 1896, the soldiers looked on without stirring a finger to prevent it, and the constant forays of the same tribe, and the brutality of their chief, Shiekh Sadiq of Neri, has led to the almost entire abandonment of the adjacent districts of Gavar and Albeg.

Even in Kochanes the Nestorians cannot feel perfectly secure, for their flocks were raided in 1896, and they live in constant apprehension of an organised attack and massacre like that of Bedr Khan Bey and Nub Ullah of Bashkala fifty years ago.

At the time of the late disturbances such a panic invaded the little community at Kochanes that it was with the utmost difficulty that Mr. Browne dissuaded the Catholicos from abandoning his post and taking refuge in Tkhoma; and the suspicion—it is to be hoped an unfounded one—is still widely entertained that the Turks are only waiting for a plausible excuse to destroy an independence which has long been distasteful to them.

The outlook has not been rendered more cheerful by the quarrels which, in the course of the past few years, have broken out in Mar Shimun's own family. His three brothers, Mar Auram, Nimrod, and Absalom, belying the favourable estimate which former travellers had formed of their character,¹ joined in a rebellion against him, to which the Government is believed to have secretly lent their support, and endeavoured to make him their tool in the assignment of posts to their own favourites. The plot failed, owing to the loyalty of the general body of the people, and the only tangible result has been the transference of the successorship to the Catholicate from Mar Auram to Benjamin. The future, however, cannot but be a source of great anxiety, especially to Mr. Browne, whose presence in these remote districts is the principal check on illegitimate pressure by the Government; and it is not unlikely that the Ashirets may, before long, decide to cast in their lot with their co-religionists in Persia, who have already testified their readiness to join the Orthodox Church for the sake of foreign protection.

Few missionaries have been welcomed with an enthusiasm so universal and spontaneous as that which enabled the two Russian priests who came to Urmi

¹ Cf. *Catholicos of the East*, p. 16.



BENJAMIN

SURMA

NESTORIAN CHILDREN AT KOCHANES

in the spring of 1897 to enrol among the list of their professed converts, within the space of a very few months, not only Mar Yonan, the bishop of Superghan, who subsequently went to Russia to be received into the Orthodox communion, but also almost the entire Nestorian population of his diocese, numbering over ten thousand souls. How far they were acting on instructions from St. Petersburg it is difficult to say. That they can have proceeded entirely on their own initiative is scarcely credible, and the fact that they were shortly afterwards recalled from Persia seems to show that the Government had not yet made up its mind as to the degree of responsibility which it was prepared to undertake, and that the mission was sent out as a kind of 'ballon d'essai' to discover in what direction the wind blew. Its return is merely a question of time and policy, and no doubt the despatch of a Russian consul at the same time to Urmi, as an outward and visible sign of the reality of the Czar's protectorate, will insure for it the same hearty reception as before from those whose attachment to their ancestral creed is overborne by the weight of their temporal difficulties. Should the Nestorians of Kurdistan, who certainly do not occupy any more enviable position than those of Persia, decide to follow their example and become,

to all intents and purposes, naturalised Russian subjects, their patrons will have succeeded in obtaining a delightfully simple pretext for interfering whenever they may desire to do so in the internal affairs both of Persia and of Turkey.

We were much relieved by the appearance of our Tkhoma muleteers, albeit a day after the appointed time, as we had feared the authorities at Bashkala might have seized their animals in lieu of the tribute owing to them. It was with genuine regret that we parted from our kind and hospitable hosts, receiving as a farewell memento from the lady Surma, a pair of socks knitted by her own fair hands and a couple of twisted tapers of bee's-wax. The mists, which for some days had completely hidden the hill-tops, now rolled away and afforded us a magnificent view of the serried heights of Diz and Jelu from the summit of the pass above Kochanes. Another jagged barrier of cliffs rises to the left of the track by which we waded southward through the deep slushy snow to the valley of Julamerk. The village lies at the foot of an imposing rock, and the feverish situation, combined with the intense heat and mosquito swarms, compels the inhabitants to migrate to the higher slopes in summer. We were entertained as usual by the Mutessarif, and

Mr. Browne had numerous inquiries to make after the health of the officers, many of whom had drawn largely on his slender stores of quinine. Among our visitors was a 'hekim,'¹ a convert to Islam, but obviously a latitudinarian, for he betrayed by unmistakable signs his disagreement with the Prophet's views on the temperance question.

Julamerk is the subject of several picturesque legends illustrative of the state of society in the old days, when the miras exercised undisturbed sway in the district. One of these relates to the castle which once overlooked the town, but of which scarcely a trace now remains. The mira, so the story runs, fell sick and died, and the clan chose a weak and incapable successor. Some of the dissentient chiefs thereupon took counsel together, and recollecting the existence of a cousin of their deceased lord who was pursuing the humble calling of a shepherd at Garwa, they sent a body of horsemen with instructions to make a feint of attacking his flocks that they might try his mettle. The test proved eminently satisfactory, and the bravery he displayed determined them to make him their mira. Within a few days twenty trusty men of Diz and twenty of Tkhoma presented themselves at the gates

¹ Doctor.

of the castle in the guise of wood-carriers and demanded admittance. On being refused and ordered to deposit their loads at the entrance, they retorted that the servants were always pilfering the firewood intended for their master, and insisted on bringing it into the courtyard that he might see it for himself. No sooner had they gained their point than they attacked the garrison, set fire to the castle, and after murdering the mira with the daggers concealed in their bundles, installed the shepherd in his place.

Near the village the road descends to the Zab through a narrow cleft, by rough steps hewn out of the rock, very like those worn by the passage of countless caravans over the wild 'Kotals' south of Shiraz. The 'Stangi' of Kurdistan have a more romantic history, for it was the daughter of another 'mira' who, 'in maiden meditation fancy free,' conceived the original idea of turning to the public account the energies of her numerous suitors. To each of them she gave an apple (the taste of the ladies of mythology for apples must have been inherited directly from Mother Eve), and each thinking himself the favoured aspirant, set to work to prove his devotion by assiduous labour with pickaxe and spade. Meanwhile the damsel took up her station on a rock by the river-side to watch

JULAMERK





the progress of the work, and when at last the task was accomplished, drowned herself to avoid the disagreeable necessity of making an invidious distinction between her adorers. The natives, in their admiration for this public-spirited fraud, still reverently kiss the rock on which she sat as they pass along the road

The romantic beauty of this valley of the Zab between Julamerk and Leezan could hardly be surpassed. The gorge at times narrows to a mere gash between precipitous walls of stupendous height, through which the torrent, green as the chrysoprase, forces its way, now broken into foaming fall and swirling eddy, and anon broadening out into placid pools that glass the glittering snows of distant mountain crests. The large tumbled boulders that fringe the margin are hung with mellow-tinted festoons of trailing vine leaves, and here and there among them gleams a vivid patch of blue and yellow crocuses. Sometimes you ford a narrow bend or cross a frail wicker bridge, sometimes the track rises high over the river bed, and as you pass beneath the overhanging rock a herd of browsing goats above will send a shower of shale and pebbles rattling down about your head. Few and far between you find tiny clusters of stone houses built in tiers up the hillside, a field or two of rice and millet raised on

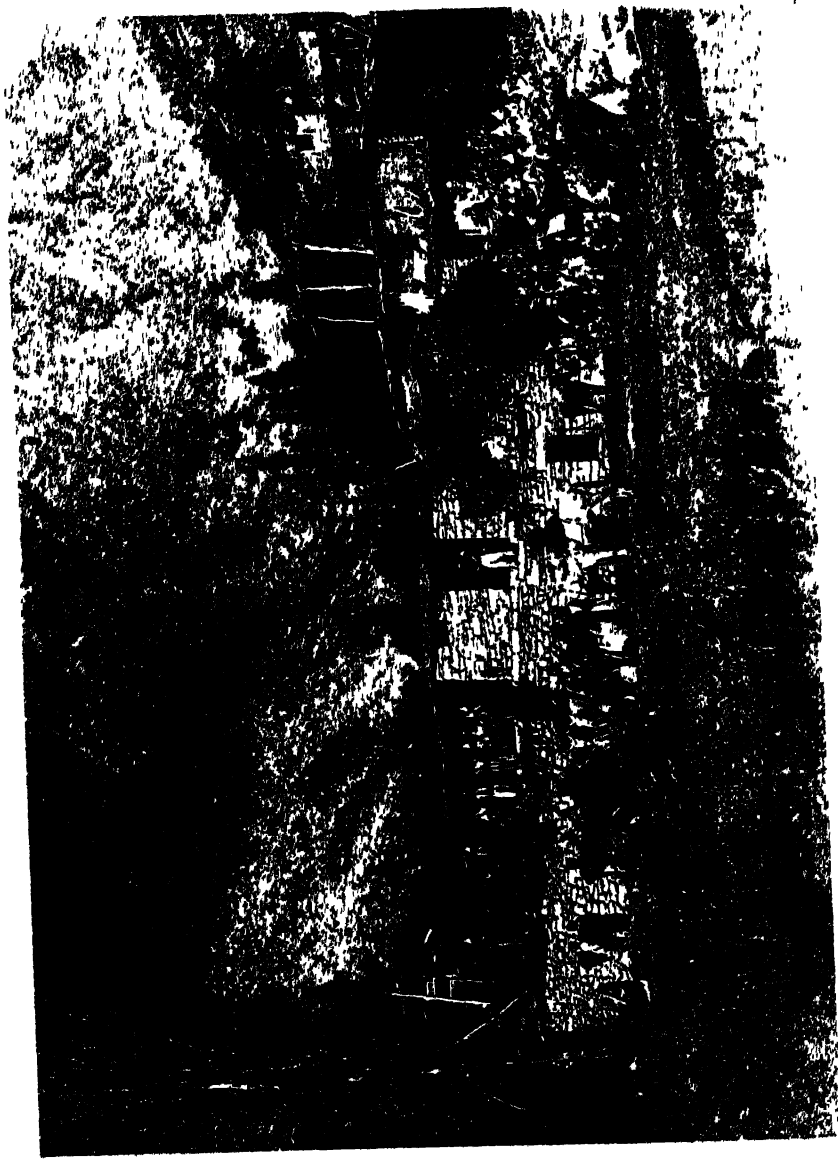
artificial terraces to protect them from a sudden flood, and, it may be, a clump of poplars. Often an unexpected rise after heavy rain will overwhelm these puny defences and then subside, leaving desolation behind it, as in Tkhoma, where we found a mere trickle of water threading its way through a wilderness of stones that had buried every vestige of cultivation. The same cause had blocked the footpath along the southern portion of the ravine and obliged us to turn up the western valley of Tal under the monastery of Mar Audishu, in front of which all pious Nestorians dismount in token of reverence.

Between Rabbat, where we slept, and Tkhoma, there is a lofty range of hills, and our ascent was impeded by a blinding snowstorm, which luckily cleared sufficiently by the time we gained the summit to allow us a partial view of the wonderful panorama, the effect of which was greatly enhanced by the surging sea of mist and cloud that lay at our feet, the circling snow peaks rising from its folds like a chain of island hills. The deep mud and loose rolling stones made the descent exceedingly toilsome and unpleasant, and, chilled as we were to the bone, we gladly took refuge from the incessant downpour in a natural cave to light a fire and eat our lunch. Resuming our march through

wild and naked scenery we came upon a party of Syrians, who reported an affray with the Kurds, one of whom had got a knife through his ribs, and their tale was confirmed lower down by a litter of rifled bales and a pool of blood by the road-side. At Tkhoma Gawaia (Middle Tkhoma) we were told that the wounded man had succumbed to his injuries, but no one seemed to attach much importance to the incident. The valley at this spot is of exceptional width, and every inch of cultivable ground is planted with gardens of poplar, sycamore, and oak, fed from small artificially banked-up channels. The houses are built in two stories, the upper one having its entire front exposed to the cool breezes, and the sleeping apartments opening on the sheltered verandah, which is piled high with heaps of maize and millet. During the hot weather the inhabitants either remove to Yaila (summer quarters) on the hills, or take their siesta on platforms of woven twigs supported by four tall poles either in the dry bed of the stream or on the flat roofs, where the corn is stacked, like the tezek in the villages round Erzerum. Figs and vines are trained in luxuriant profusion up the sides of the house, forming a delicious screen from the burning rays, and from the blackened rafters hung large bunches of dried tobacco leaves.

A very tolerable red wine is extracted from the little sweet purple grape, and Benjamin gained a great reputation when he was here by the skill with which he severed the higher clusters from the tree branches with his sling. Every one—even the smallest child—wears the Robinson Crusoe hat, and a favourite form of personal adornment is to hang from under it, round the ears, the brilliant yellow blossoms of the marsh marigold. Some of the small wicker shields gaily decorated with tassels, which are now only used in native dances, may still be seen in Gawaia, and many of the maliks and richer men possess old khanja sheaths of very fine silver chasing.

The evening of our arrival was enlivened by an unexpected occurrence which might have involved no little embarrassment to ourselves. It so happened that we had unwittingly brought with us a Syrian zaptieh, who had given great offence to the tribe of Tkhoma. During the quarrel in the patriarch's family he had enlisted in the service of Nimrod, and had taken a share in robbing of their daggers some of the local adherents of Mar Shimun who were engaged in collecting corn for their master. Why, knowing these facts, he had ventured himself in the enemy's stronghold remains a mystery, but seeing him delivered thus un-



NESTORIAN HOUSE IN TKHOMA

expectedly into their hands, the headmen collected in solemn conclave to discuss what should be done with him. 'On my head and ears,' we heard him declare, 'I took but a single khanja, and that was appropriated by my lord, so I cannot restore it.' The debate lasted over an hour, and the judges were duly careful to impress upon the culprit the fact that he was absolutely at their mercy, and that they might execute him forthwith if they chose. In deference, however, to the claims of hospitality, as they courteously explained to us, they finally concluded that they could not proceed to extremities against one who had come in our service, and satisfied themselves with exacting from him a verbal assurance that he would hereafter make such reparation as he could.

Then, having settled this knotty point, they joined us round the fire in the inner room and plied us with anxious inquiries about the political situation. 'Would England lift no finger to save them from the fate which had already overtaken the Armenians and their southern neighbours the Yezidis, and which they feared was in store for themselves? Were we ignorant of the real facts of the situation, or was it indeed the truth that, having reaped our own advantage from the Cyprus Convention, we were indifferent to the

obligations which the settlement of 1878 imposed upon us?' The same eternal question addressed to the Englishman wherever he goes, by the Armenians, the Syrians, the Arabs, and even by the Turks themselves—the question to which there is but one reply, and that is received with incredulity. England's prestige is too firmly established in these parts to allow her to shelter herself under the plea of impotence. If she does not interpose, it is not, they say, because she cannot send her fleet to Lake Van. It must be because her policy has changed, because her own interests lie elsewhere, or because she is afraid. Yet she has never formally repudiated her engagements, she keeps her consuls in the country, a minister of her Church has for ten years gone in and out among these hill folk, living their life, sharing their interests, taking part in their worship. It is she, not Russia, still less the Concert of Europe, who has displayed the slightest concern for their future, or has striven to establish any connection with them. No wonder that to them it seems a baffling and insoluble riddle. How can they understand the intricacies of modern diplomacy, or realise that, having 'put our money on the wrong horse,' we may, from the best of motives, resolve neither to run our own nor invite a second failure by trying to

‘spot’ the winner again? They think us disinterested—they believe--and rightly—that the stakes we played for were lives, not those of private ambition for which our competitors are playing—and they know or suspect that if we have ‘scratched’ it is no longer a matter of vital concern to them who eventually wins the race for the prize.

CHAPTER VIII

TKHOMA TO MOSUL

WE left Tkhoma late one sunny evening and picked our way among the mass of *debris* that covered the margin of the stream. Peering from a cave in the rocks above us, our guides caught sight of three Kurds, rifle in hand, on the lookout for passing caravans, and implored us to allow them to try a long shot, but this sportsmanlike instinct we felt ourselves bound to restrain. Turning to the east by a cluster of terebinth shrubs we entered the valley of Salabegan, and dismounted at a long rambling house, the façade of which was adorned with a number of fine ibex horns. The owner was away, but his brother showed us into a large room upstairs. It had been newly built, and he was very proud of it, but the architect had omitted to provide any chimney or exit for the smoke except a few microscopic cracks in the outer wall, so that before long we found ourselves hanging out of the windows and gasping for breath. By the time we had pitched out the smouldering faggots and

cleared the atmosphere a procession of women approached through the moonlight with laden dishes of pilaf and grapes

Our host and his neighbours sat round us unusually silent and shy, but became more talkative when we had introduced them to a tin of mixed biscuits from Van. One of them gave me, as a parting gift, a wooden spoon attached to a chain, the whole cut with a penknife out of a single piece, not unlike those made by the peasants in Norway. Carving is an art in which Orientals often attain considerable proficiency, and at Abadeh, in Persia, I have bought spoons, forks, and eggcups of pearwood so thin and delicate as to be almost transparent. But there is a more prosaic accomplishment in which, unlike the Persians, the Syrians are hopelessly deficient. They are by far the most incompetent muleteers I have ever had to do with, and never by any chance did we succeed in starting for three hours after the proper time. They would get up punctually long before sunrise, and then waste the whole morning chattering and wrangling with one another, adjusting the loads with infinite care and then pulling them off again, only to rearrange them worse than before. Our two Turkish zaptiehs would look on in despair, unable to apply to the Syrians the spur of

a good whipping, which a *katır* in other parts of the country expects and accepts as a matter of course, and expostulations or abuse from us only increased their obstinacy. The delay on the morning we left Salabegan was portentous, for our plans necessitated a division of the party, and the problem of apportioning the baggage presented difficulties well-nigh insuperable. The path to Leezan is practically impassable for horses, and it was consequently necessary to send the *zaptiehs* round by Châl, across a ford which can be easily passed when the water is low. Not wishing to encumber ourselves with a larger train than we could avoid on the slippery mountain ledges, we intrusted them with the greater part of the baggage, and started ourselves down the dry gully, which we left at the end of about six miles and struck across the limestone cliffs to the tiny hamlet of Shurt. A cake of coarse 'dhurra' bread was all that we could procure in the poverty-stricken hovel where we rested our horses, and the woman who gave it us was sobbing bitterly over the loss of her only child, who had died the day before for lack of any lighter nourishment. The view from the open balcony was glorious. Below lay the glen we had just traversed, barred at its north-eastern extremity by a gigantic peak visible even from the plain of Mosul, and far away to

our right, aslope on a broad shoulder, the fields of Châl lay basking in the sunlight.

The mule-road to Leczan keeps along the crest of the hills, but the traveller who has a good head or is not afraid to trust to the assistance of the guides, whose felt sandals afford them a secure footing on the steepest inclines, does better to follow the track, scarcely more than six inches wide, that dips down the lofty banks of shale and conglomerate overhanging the Zab. The town lies on the right bank, and is reached by a primitive bridge of basket-work stretched on poplar poles of various lengths, which project one above another from a block of masonry at either end. The whole structure being tilted considerably to one side and the basket-work full of large holes, the task of crossing it requires a strong nerve, and is not facilitated by the well-meant offices of the natives, who hang on to one's coat tails under the impression that it has a steadying effect. The guest-house stands close to the stream a little higher up, and is tenanted by the churchwarden for the time being, who enjoys his office as a reward for 'stangi' cutting on the road. The appointment, which lasts for three years, is held alternately by a resident of the two hill villages of the 'Castle' and the 'Cave,' who during the period of his

incumbency has a right to the use of the wool and grain belonging to the church by way of compensation for the hospitality which he is expected to extend to the passing traveller or pilgrim

The theory that the present inhabitants of Hakkiarî are descendants of refugees from the south is curiously corroborated by the fact that all the valleys appear to have been replenished from isolated settlements above them. Those of Salabegan and Tkhoma have derived their whole population from three such small centres, and Leezan from the two just mentioned. It was among the mountains overlooking the stream that the appalling massacre took place fifty years ago, when Bedr Khan Bey and his troops surrounded the terrified Christians who had taken their last stand on a broad platform of rock, and after inducing them to surrender on a promise that their lives would be spared, hurled man, woman, and child over the edge of the precipice. Close to the guest-house is the tiny church of St. George. The door is on a level with the ground, but almost as low as that of Mar Shalita, and in their general features the two buildings bear a strong resemblance to one another, except that at Leezan there is no room set apart for the preparation of the communion bread, and the only decoration consists of a

number of carpets and hangings, the humble offerings of the congregation. Our caravan arrived late, the baggage soaked through and the men drenched to the skin, for the bridge is only practicable for foot passengers, and the ford was so deep owing to the recent rains that the animals had been forced to swim.

Our departure from Leezan entailed our saying good-bye to Mr. Browne, who had business to transact on the spot, and was anxious to get back to Kochanes before the winter set in. He had put himself to some inconvenience to accompany us so far, and his perfect familiarity with the people and their language had made the journey infinitely pleasanter, and more instructive than we should have found it without such a companion. Indeed it would have been exceedingly difficult to get through at all by our unaided exertions, for there are not many Syrians who can speak Turkish and still fewer Turks who can even understand Syrian. No one can be long in Mr. Browne's company and see how completely he has identified himself with those among whom for so many years he has lived, cut off from all civilised society, without a feeling of intense admiration, and a regret that there are not more missionaries of his type. If among the army of preachers sent out year by year

by the warring sects of Christendom there were a larger proportion who could realise how infinitely more important it is to 'strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die,' than to perplex the simple minds of those who are already believers by their theological subtleties, they would at least be sowing seed that will some day bear fruit, instead of directly adding to the confusion and disorder which at present affords the Moslem the best possible object-lesson in the superiority of his own creed.

Three Nestorians went with us from Leezan to show the road, which for about three miles follows the right bank, sometimes along the narrow irrigation channels, sometimes over the boulders at the water's edge, and then winds by sharp zigzags to the top of a high ridge clothed with a dense forest of dwarf oak hung with enormous galls and acorns.

Tavernier, who travelled in 1670, states that the people habitually used bread made from these acorns, and the high estimation in which the oak galls were held at that time may be judged from the account which he gives of the condition of the districts lying between the Tigris and Tabriz. 'There is no country in the world,' he says, 'where there is more gold or silver laid out, and where they are more nice in taking money

that is in the least defective either in weight or goodness of metal. For galls, being a commodity for dyeing, and nowhere to be found so good as there, bring a vast trade into the country, wherein there are no villages; yet it is overspread with houses a musquet-shot from one another, and every inhabitant has his quarter of his vineyard by himself, where they dry their grapes'

The trade alluded to was probably that of the Levant Company, which was reckoned by Chardin, only a century after its incorporation under a charter of Queen Elizabeth in 1581, at a yearly value of five or six hundred thousand pounds, arising out of the sale of cloth and silver in exchange for wool, cotton-yarn, silk, and galls. Twenty thousand pieces of English cloth were exported annually, and Tavernier mentions the fact that his nephew accompanied a caravan travelling with a consignment of these goods between Lake Van and the Persian frontier. The Company, consisting at that time of some three hundred merchants, besides presenting and pensioning the ambassador at the Porte and electing the consuls at the important centres at Smyrna and Aleppo, 'brought up in Turkey a number of young persons well-descended, who learned the trade upon the place itself' Their merchants, travelling *viâ* Aleppo and Baghdad, exploited the

distant markets of Agra, Lahore, and Malacca, and carried on a thriving business until the discovery of the Cape route destroyed their virtual monopoly of the overland commerce with India.

Descending the southern slope we entered the valley of Berwari, where we met a Syrian who had been educated by the American missionaries at Mosul, and could speak a little English. From him we learned that our guides were entirely out in their calculations, and that we could not possibly reach Hais, as we had intended, that night; so after a rather weary trudge in heavy showers across a monotonous expanse of stones and oak shrub, we halted at Eyett. The room we secured was quite uninhabitable until we had raked the damp smouldering twigs from the clay floor, and deposited them to cook our dinner on the roof of the house below. The 'malik' complained bitterly of the lawlessness prevailing in the district. The Kurds, he said, had lately carried off as many as three thousand sheep from a neighbouring village, and the mutessarif of Amadiyah would do nothing to check or punish them. The Syrians were quite helpless to protect themselves, for they had no better weapons than old rusty flintlocks—a fact which we had noticed during the afternoon, one of our guides having displayed the most



KURDISH WOMEN AT HAIS

praiseworthy perseverance in stalking partridge coveys, only to find at the critical moment that his gun invariably missed fire

This gentleman and his two companions suddenly made their appearance as we were turning in, and asked to be paid off. They had undertaken to conduct us as far as Hais, where our zaptiehs ought to be waiting, but for reasons subsequently to be explained they did not wish to go any further, and as we were now within a few miles of the place, there was no particular object in keeping them. When, however, we offered them the money agreed upon, they declined to take it, saying that we had promised them a larger sum, and threatening, if we refused their demand, to go off and inform a party of Kurds near at hand that we were to cross the hills next morning and had no armed escort. This we told them they were welcome to do if they chose; but thinking that, should they carry out their intention, it would be pleasant to give them a surprise, we at once despatched a native of Eyett to request our men to come over from Hais and meet us half-way. He went after considerable demur, alleging that he would run great risk of being devoured by wolves and wild boar in the woods. Day broke and there was no sign either of him or the blackmailers.

They had absented themselves for some hours during the night, but came up as we were on the point of starting, with profuse professions of penitence for their conduct, and a request that we would give them the money they had before refused. Not knowing how or where they had spent their 'night out,' we insisted on their accompanying us, so that if their friends the Kurds tried a shot at our party they might have at least a chance of bagging their accomplices as well. However, no Kurds appeared, and when we were safe through the woods we let the blackguards go, for they declared that having not long ago murdered a man in cold blood while he lay asleep, their lives would not be worth a moment's purchase if they entered Hais, and we had not the heart to abuse a confidence so generously bestowed. Riding on with our single Syrian zaptieh, who had cautiously discarded both his uniform and sword for fear that he might be robbed of them, we entered the outlying plantations of walnut and mulberry interspersed with a curious kind of small tree bearing berries of the flavour of dates.

In a room on the upper floor of a Kurdish house, drying their clothes before a roaring fire and plunged in the deepest grief, we found our two Turkish zaptiehs, who had arrived only an hour before. The third, the

'onbashi' Naaman, was missing. He had been drowned in crossing the ford, and his comrades had spent the night searching for the body and digging a grave for it by the river brink. It appears that the water had been so swollen by the late storms that one of the three mules, which entered it with the unfortunate man, was swept off its legs by the current, and in attempting to recover it he got out of his depth and sank at once with the weight of the cartridges which he wore. The rest managed to cross with assistance from the village, and found the corpse more than a mile further down battered out of all recognition. The mule which carried the tent was washed up on a rock. It was dead, but its load had escaped without injury, and the only article missing was a saddle-bag which, as luck would have it, contained a number of presents from the Vali of Van to the governor of Mosul.

Thus, on the only occasion on which we were exposed to any serious risk of attack, we had been deprived of the protection of our escort. Yet, as we afterwards learned, by the time they had returned to Van our zaptiehs had succeeded in evolving from the rich stores of their imagination a most thrilling story of the peril which we had undergone and of the valour

displayed by themselves. 'Seventy or eighty Kurds,' they reported, 'had suddenly attacked our party, and for three hours we had remained in cover behind the rocks while they did their best to return the fire of our assailants, until fortunately the situation was saved by the timely appearance of a rival tribe upon the scene'!

The bit of country between Hais and Amadiyah was reported to be very unsafe, and two natives had been murdered on the road the preceding day, but although our escort kept a sharp lookout as we crossed the bleak hillside, we saw no one. From the summit we looked down a deep glen over the broad undulating plain, from the southern edge of which springs a remarkable terrace of reddish rock crowned with the ruinous walls of the old castle of Amadiyah. According to Badger, it was built in 1832 by the Kurdish agha of Rowandiz, who captured the position and held it for ten years until it was reduced by the Vali of Mosul. But the strategic advantages of its situation must have rendered it a place of great importance at a much earlier period, and Tavernier mentions that in his time it was under the command of a Bey 'that is able to raise eight or ten thousand horse, and more foot than any other of the Beys, by reason his country is so populous'! Round its



base lies a gleaming girdle of poplars, and the slanting rays playing on their brilliant quivering foliage offered a contrast of extraordinary beauty to the dark indigo of the barrier of cliffs that lined the southern horizon. At the mouth of the glen a splendid cascade falls in masses of spray through a tangle of vines and creepers from a broad grassy platform, on which a group of peasant women were winnowing corn. Passing through the gardens we reached the castle by a steep winding path, and found the mutessarif awaiting us at the gate. This imposing structure of stone, surmounted by a story of woodwork and flanked with buttresses, leads into a large open space containing a few dilapidated houses, a solitary minaret of giant proportions, and the Government quarters. Here, for the first time for many days, we could enjoy the luxury of a good fire, provided with an orthodox chimney, and dry our wardrobe, which was wet through after its immersion in the Zab.

There is little to see at Amadiyah except a dirty bazaar and a much defaced bas relief representing two male figures, apparently of Sassanian workmanship, which adorns a rock at the head of a long flight of steps leading up to the round tower gateway on the north. Like Julamerk, the place is excessively feverish, and all who can do so remove in summer to the hills. During

our short stay the weather was bitterly cold, with violent gales and snow-showers, and it was a relief to know that now only one pass lay between us and the sunny plains of the Tigris. This pass over the Ghara range is not more than five thousand feet, but a thin layer of snow made the road very slippery. We slept at Spindari (Kurd), keeping out the cold as best we might by stuffing rugs and macintoshes into the big portholes in the walls of our room, and next day passed the last belt of oak copse, and entered a valley fringed with bushes of oleander and blackthorn. The mudir of Atush, who gave us quarters for the night, was shivering with a severe bout of fever, and very grateful for a small present of quinine. He had unpleasant news to give us, for, on hearing that we intended to visit the Yezidi temple of Sheikh Adi, he informed us that it had been almost demolished and its devotees exterminated five years ago by the fanatical general Fariq Pasha.

When next day, after a three hours' ride, we reached the pretty ravine from whose shady bowers of fig and mulberry rise the three white-fluted spires of the famous shrine, we found his description only too true. Of the building, which, to judge from its name and the character of its architecture, was probably once a Nestorian church, scarcely more than the outer shell and roof

remain intact. The beautiful little court—containing a well which the faithful say is fed from Zemzem, the sacred spring at Mecca—and the surrounding dwellings, formerly used for the accommodation of pilgrims at the great annual festival, are all completely ruined. A number of sacred emblems are carved above the door of the saints' tomb, and among them can still be distinguished the outline of a lamb, a hatchet, and a snake, but there is no longer any trace of the brilliant colouring which Layard described. Above the lintel is an Arabic inscription with the date 133 of the Hegira. The key is kept by one of the mullahs who now have charge of the place, and as he was away when we arrived we could not gain admission. I believe there is nothing of interest inside, for the 'Melek Taous,' the sacred bird idol which used to be kept there, was either taken by the soldiers or more probably conveyed away before the attack.

This atrocious attempt at the forcible conversion of the 'devil-worshippers' to Islam was made by order of the Government, though it is possible that Fariq exceeded his instructions in the methods he employed. However that may be, it was not until he had practically wiped out the Yezidis of Baazani, Sheikh Adi and Bashika, and had made an expedition against their only

remaining strongholds in the Sinjar, which they bravely and successfully resisted, that orders were sent for his recall. The avowed pretext for the outrage was their refusal, on religious grounds, to pay the tax in lieu of military service, exemption from which was included in the firman by which they secured toleration for their worship in 1847. This was due mainly to the exertions of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, whose indignation had been roused by the terrible massacre at Koyunjik shortly before, and not unnaturally this harmless and interesting people have ever since looked upon the English as their willing protectors. The fact that, so far as I know, no protest even was addressed to the Sultan on the occasion of this last flagrant breach of his pledges, surely deserved more notice than it apparently received at the time.

Soon after leaving Sheikh Adi we reached the sandy plain, and followed the foot of the hills eastward through several small Arab villages to Bavian. Here, at the mouth of a ravine, the Khosr Su dashes its limpid waters, swarming with tiny silvery fish, against the base of a striking line of sandstone cliffs. Carved in bold relief along their face are a series of Assyrian sculptures bearing inscriptions of the early years of Sennacherib's reign, which record the extensive works which he

carried out for the irrigation of the country. By far the most remarkable and the best preserved of these is a group of four colossal figures cut on a panel nearly thirty feet square. Two of these figures represent deities wearing the usual horned head-dress. One has the head of a lion, the other of an eagle, and both extend in their hands the sacrificial emblems of the fir-cone and basket. Behind each is a king, probably the royal subject of the inscriptions, for in both cases the figure and features are the same. On a higher level, almost inaccessible except with the aid of a ladder, are a number of smaller tablets, so defaced as to render it impossible to recognise more than the bare outline of a priest or king, and a few cuneiform characters above his head. About ten feet from the ground, and open to the air, are several square flat-roofed chambers containing, along three sides of the interior, short niches apparently intended for the reception of a corpse; but, unlike the king's sepulchres at Nukshi Rustem, near Persepolis, they are destitute of all external sculpture, and there is no sign that they were ever provided with doors. Close to the water's edge lies a fallen block rudely fashioned in the form of a winged bull, attended by three small human figures.

We forded the stream as the sun went down,

tingeing the distant hills of Rowandiz along the Persian frontier with delicate flushes of rose and violet, and, keeping for an hour to the banks, white with slender feathery rushes, found a lodging at last in the house of a wealthy Arab sheep-farmer.

During the two succeeding days we journeyed leisurely southwards, walking some way ahead of the caravan and getting a good deal of varied shooting. The arid expanse was covered with flocks of plover, rock dove, and sand grouse; and every now and then a hare would start up from a clump of camel-thorn, or a large bustard rise with heavy ungainly flight from a patch of green by the Khausser stream, startling a motley swarm of ruddy sheldrake, teal, and crane. Once, too, near Khorsabad, we sighted a large herd of gazelle, but failed to get within range of them.

This famous site of the palace of Sargon, which formed a part of the great city of Nineveh, is now occupied by a few squalid hovels, and surrounded with malarious swamps. The large mound presents no indications whatever of M. Botta's excavations, or of the ruins which the drifting sands have effectually concealed, beyond a fragment or two of inscribed brick strewn over the surface. Our room was open on both sides to the air, and the thermometer registered six

degrees of frost during the night. At dinner-time an excited goose rushed in and overturned the teapot, and our slumbers were disturbed in the grey dawn by a babel of bleating and lowing as the goats and cows passed through to pasture. Before noon we caught sight of the domes and minarets of Mosul, and passing between the Tomb of Jonah (Nebbi Yunus) and the mounds of Koyunjik, reached the splendid bridge, some sixteen hundred feet in length—half boats, half masonry—which spans the Tigris. On the pebbly beach the Arabs were selling fruit at little booths, or watering their camels, while the women washed their gay-coloured garments and spread them on the rocks to dry. A short but bewildering walk through bazaars roofed with branches and matting, and narrow tortuous alleys paved with small round stones and shut in by high mud walls, brought us to the house of Mr. Nimrod Rassam, the nephew of Layard's fellow-explorer, who acts as British Vice-Consul, and had kindly offered us his hospitality until we could look out for other quarters.

CHAPTER IX

MOSUL AND EL HATHR

THE general resemblance which at first sight Mosul bears to Baghdad is not borne out on a closer acquaintance. The two cities are built in a similar position upon the river, which in both cases is crossed by a bridge of boats. In both there is the same picturesque throng of Arabs, Kurds, Syrians, Armenians, and Turks, the same army of mangy curs, the same evidences of the widespread ravages of the 'date-boil.' But the character of their architecture is entirely different; and whereas at Mosul only one side of the river is occupied by buildings, at Baghdad the old and modern quarters are separated from one another upon opposite banks. At Mosul, too, you miss the graceful clusters of date, palm, pomegranate, and orange, the long stretch of gardens, the projecting wooden lattices and balconies, which give so pleasing a variety to the streets of the old capital of the Caliphs. On the other hand, a considerable proportion of the houses are built of stone instead

of brick, and the walls surrounding the 'patios' are often faced with a marble resembling alabaster, from a neighbouring quarry, and carved with delicate designs in arabesque. The stream, which on the lower reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates, from Hillah southwards, swarms with boats of every description, from the clumsy 'baggalas' or merchant craft to the gondola-like canoes of Bussorah¹ and the circular 'guffas' of palm branches smeared with petroleum, which date from prehistoric times, is here navigated only by rough rafts of poplar poles floated on skins, and paddled by a single 'kelekji.'

There are few public edifices of any interest or beauty—none that compare with the famous mosque of Kazimin with its glittering gilded domes—and the iridescent faience with which many of them were originally decorated has now almost entirely disappeared. The most peculiar characteristics are the high walls which surround the town, and the tall leaning minaret of the mosque of Nureddin.

Close to the southern gate, and overlooking the stream, stands the serai, whither we repaired the day after our arrival to pay our respects to the Vali. He

¹ The 'belum' is a long narrow boat with curved prow and stern and a covered space in the centre.

had just received his recall to Constantinople in consequence of repeated memorials from the province, and professed himself by no means sorry to terminate a period of office which, even if it had been as remunerative as was commonly reported, he had found both dull and disheartening. All his well-meant reforms, he declared, had been frustrated by the obstinate conservatism of the people. In vain had he tried by purchasing seed, and inculcating improved methods of agriculture, to introduce the cultivation of maize in addition to the usual crops of Egyptian millet, wheat, and rice. No one would take his advice. The old methods were good enough for them; and the marvellous fertility of the soil, which, with scarcely any preparation or labour, yielded a return of three hundredfold and more, was itself an encouragement to idleness. Then he had turned his attention to municipal affairs, and observing the total absence of lighting in the streets, had put up a number of lamps upon marble pillars. The pillars remained, but not so the lamps, for the officials appointed to look after them stole the oil, and although the poorer classes had been exempted from all contribution towards the expense of the experiment, and the wealthier householders had been charged the very modest tax of two piastres a

MOSUL



month, such was the consensus of adverse opinion that, as he pathetically observed, 'they are all rejoicing now that as soon as his Excellency is gone we shall be left in peace and darkness again.'

The huge shapeless mounds of Koyunjik, beneath which lie buried the ruins of Sennacherib's palace, have been so often and so well described, that it would be superfluous to devote to them more than a passing mention. No excavations have been permitted for many years, and the expense of obtaining a concession from the governor, increased as it is by inordinate demands for backsheesh, would be in itself a sufficient discouragement, apart from the condition invariably attached to the firman, that all the more interesting and valuable 'finds' must be handed over to the museum in Stamboul. The consequence is that such digging as takes place must be carried on by stealth, and seal cylinders and slabs of inscribed brick and marble from the sites of Babylon, Koyunjik, Nimrod, and Kaleh Shergat are hawked about in all the bazaars from Mosul to Bussorah, with a plentiful sprinkling of excellent forgeries executed by an enterprising firm at Baghdad for the benefit of the unwary antiquarian.

At Koyunjik there is no longer anything to be seen

except the long line of walls, from which the river has, in the course of centuries, receded more than a mile and a half, a solitary winged bull with the monarch's name inscribed between its forelegs, but minus its head, which has been abstracted to serve as a mill-stone, and two small, half-obliterated tablets. If one contrasts these scanty and unimposing remains with the vast stretch of tumuli that mark the walls of Nebuchadnezzar's city, on whose broad ramparts the charioteers drove their cars abreast, with the massive blocks of solid brick-work stamped with his name and titles, from which the Arabs of to-day quarry material for the neighbouring town of Hillah, or with the towering 'ziggurat' of Birs Nimrud on the western side of the Euphrates—it cannot be denied that in impressiveness the Chaldæan capital far surpasses the Assyrian. But the comparison is not a fair one, for Koyunjik represents but a fraction of the total extent of Nineveh, that great city of three days' journey, which stretched twenty miles southward to Nimrud, and eastward as far as Khorsabad; while from the absence of all stone and marble in the flat alluvial plains of Babylon, however stupendous the mass and height of her temples and palaces may have been, they could hardly have vied with the magnificence and rich-

ness of sculpture which distinguished the architecture of her more fortunately situated rival.

After some days spent in exploring the town and shooting teal along the banks of the Khausser, a favourite haunt of the little black and white speckled kingfisher, so familiar to travellers on the Nile, we decided to hire a kelek and float down the stream, if possible, as far as Shergat. During the spring and early summer, when the Tigris is swollen with the melting snows, the journey to Baghdad, which is twice the distance, takes little more than three days, but in autumn the tide is so sluggish, especially above the junction of the Zab, that progress is very slow, and when the winds are contrary becomes practically impossible. As a precaution, therefore, amply justified by subsequent experience, we sent a body of zaptiehs with our tents and riding-horses to follow alongside, while we embarked with a large store of provisions, including an excellent sort of local confectionery made of raisins and sesame, and an assortment of fowls tied together by the legs. Our plans were somewhat deranged by the Vali, who, having exerted himself to procure for us suitable mounts, proceeded without any warning to confiscate them on the evening before our departure, as payment for a debt owed him by the katirji.

It was on a lovely morning like a hot English summer's day, with a sky of cloudless blue, that we watched the domes and minarets of the city, to which the golden haze and the unruffled reflection in the turbid water lent an indescribable enchantment, dip slowly out of sight. On each side stretched an unbroken expanse of desert, dotted here and there with the black Arab tents, and every shoal and island was alive with colonies of duck, cormorant, and pelican.

The banks, for the most part steep and stony, alternate with low mud-flats cracking and peeling under the fierce rays which the clear atmosphere seems to focus like a burning-glass. It is only south of Amara, and within a few miles of Gurna, the traditional site of the Garden of Eden, where the two rivers unite to form the Shat el Arab, that the land derives anything like the full benefit of the rich alluvial deposit that floats undissolved in thick glutinous blotches of a ruddy chocolate colour upon the surface of the stream. There, as on the plains of Hungary, league on league as far as the eye can range right up to the hills of Luristan, is one vast field of Indian corn, through which the river meanders with such sudden twists and curves, that what you hastily assume to be a minaret far away on your left turns out to be the tall mast of a date-laden

'baggala,' sailing in the same direction as yourself. The further south you go the more striking the points of contrast become. North of Baghdad there is scarcely any attempt at artificial irrigation, whereas on the Shat el Arab and along the whole course of the Euphrates you meet with the peculiar contrivances which correspond to the Zacciyahs and Shadoufs of Upper and Lower Egypt. These water-wheels are also of two kinds, the 'jird' and the 'naoura'—the first principally used in Babylonia, and the second, so far as I can recollect, confined almost entirely to the Euphrates.

The 'jird' consists of two small parallel wheels worked on the principle of a crane, the oxen or horses walking up and down an inclined plane so as to lift or lower the skins into a deep well sunk in the bank. By a clever arrangement of the ropes attached to them the water is automatically discharged, on reaching the surface, into the narrow mud-banked channels by which it is dispersed over the adjacent fields.

The 'naoura' is of a totally different construction, and being driven by the current requires no manual labour to direct it. The huge framework of bent branches rudely lashed together revolves upon its axis at the extremity of a projecting block of masonry, which in many cases rests upon a series of arches like an

unfinished aqueduct. At Hit there are at least a dozen of these wheels reaching one in front of the other far out into the stream, and the amazing quantity of disused and moss-grown piers that one sees between Hillah and Deir el Zor is one of the most eloquent signs of the steady deterioration which has taken place in the condition of the country. Round the circumference of the wheel, which is slightly tilted to landward, and provided with small wicker paddles, are hung a number of red earthenware pots, and each in turn, as it nears the tops, spills about half its contents into the channel below. At Anah, a village which subsists mainly on the produce of its extensive palm and cotton plantations, I was told that the naouras were the property of some hundred peasant proprietors, who contributed towards the expense of keeping them in repair according to a recognised proportion calculated on the acreage of their land. At Hit, on the other hand, nearly the whole of the date-gardens which stretch between the mounds of Babil and the modern town belonged to a single wealthy Arab, at whose house we stayed

On the Tigris the palm belt practically ceases at Baghdad, which owes much of its attraction to the magnificent groves that surround the outskirts on the left bank. But the real centre of the date industry is

more than two hundred miles lower down, among the densely wooded creeks of Bussorah. Founded by the Caliph Omar in 635 A.D., to encourage the Gulf trade with India, which for several centuries, in the hands of the Venetians, the Dutch, and the English followed the great waterway to Baghdad, the produce of its date-groves, now estimated at the value of over £300,000 annually, was celebrated by Marco Polo towards the close of the thirteenth century as being then the finest in the world.¹ It is, in its way, one of the loveliest spots I have ever seen, with its rickety bridges and quaint brick houses striped in bands of brilliant cobalt along the water's edge, and its little inlets fringed with glossy leaved bananas and overhanging palms, whose feathery tops glance like pale blue sprays of hoar-frost under the moon.

Yet it is not the placid beauty of those silvered creeks so much as the splendour of the sunsets flooding the level lands of the Upper Tigris that dwells longest in the recollection of the traveller—the slow sinking of the fiery disk, which seems to swell as you look, till its hazy rim is lost in the vast aureole of light, that bathes the whole firmament from the zenith to the horizon—the racing ripples, shot with opalescent gleams of sanguine

¹ Report on the old records of the India Office. (Birdwood.)

orange and purple—the momentary trembling of the great planet on the verge, while all nature seems to watch in a breathless suspense, till, with its final plunge below the water, sky and river merge together in a mist of liquid amber.

But to return to our journey. The current, at times running swift as it rounded a bend, only to dissipate its force in miles of broad sluggish reaches, had carried us by nightfall within sight of Nimrud; but our raftsmen was unwilling to risk in the dark the passage of the great dam across the bed of the river, which tradition ascribes to the ‘mighty hunter.’ So we pitched our tent on the right bank, and, landing early next morning on the opposite shore a little lower down, proceeded on foot to the mounds. They are somewhat higher than those of Koyunjik, and although the greater part of the excavations have been carefully closed up again to prevent the destruction of the monuments from exposure, one or two vaulted passages lined with ‘written’ bricks remain open, and the surface of the sand is strewn with fragments of sculpture. We counted as many as four winged animals, of which the human heads alone project above ground, and the colossal statue of a man in an upright position, with his hands clasped in front, uncovered as far as the waist. Ali Beg, the sheikh of the Jebour



OUR RAFT ON THE TIGRIS

Arabs, who occupy the village below, is charged by the Government with the guardianship of the site, and, after showing us all that there was to be seen, he rode back with us to his house. While we did justice to the excellent meal of pilaf and yaourt which he set before us, I tried to discover whether the tribe had themselves exploited the ruins. They are probably among the oldest in Assyria, for Nimrud has been identified with Calah, one of the four cities that are mentioned together in the earliest records of the Bible,¹ and founded by Shalmanezzer I. thirteen hundred years before Christ; it contains the palaces of four subsequent kings, Sargon, Assurbanipal, who made it his capital in the eighth century instead of Assur (Kaleh Shergat), Shalmanezzer II, and Esarhaddon. A few cylinders, without either inscription or engraving, were shown to me, but the only object of any interest was a scarab, containing on its base the intaglio of a small winged sphinx. Layard frequently alludes to the number of antique gems worn by the Arab women, and by those who attended the yearly festival at Sheikh Adi; but although I saw, from time to time, many fragments, mostly of hæmatite, on which their owners placed a ridiculous value, partly because of their supposed potency as charms, and partly

¹ Gen x 11.

because exaggerated reports are current of the high prices paid for such curiosities in Europe, I never found any that were worth purchasing except among the dealers in the large towns.

A number of horses are bred in the vicinity of Nimrud, but the best are exported to India or Constantinople, and thoroughbreds are seldom seen in Jezireh. The finest belong to the sheikhs of the various tribes, or find their way into the stables of the Turkish governors and pashas, and the average animals on which the Bedouin make elaborate displays of their horsemanship, tilting at one another with their huge lances of female bamboo tipped with iron, are for the most part very indifferent specimens

The men are often handsome, and in old age the contrast of their dark eyes and long white flowing beards gives them a very striking and venerable appearance. The universal dress is a long sleeveless abba of thick, coarse worsted, striped white and brown, and worn over a cotton shirt, which is sometimes confined above the hips with a gaudy silk sash. The head-gear consists of voluminous folds of the same brilliantly coloured material, and the tasselled ends are allowed to fall over the back, or in cold weather are drawn across the face, in such a manner as to conceal all but the eyes of the wearer.

Over this 'kefiyah' a circlet of black camel-hair rope is twisted round the crown of the head, and the feet are either left bare, or cased in wide red leather leggings, like the jack-boots of the Cromwellian trooper.

The women, who rarely veil themselves, are plainer than the men, and coarsened by the drudgery and hard field labour in which they pass their lives, but they are better looking than their sisters in the south, and less addicted to the practice of disfiguring themselves with nose and lip rings or tattooing. This may be due to the fact that the Arabs of Upper Mesopotamia are of purer stock than those who inhabit the marsh lands, and who exhibit strong traces of a strain of Negro blood. I remember on the occasion of a visit to one of the largest date-packing establishments at Bussorah seeing several blacks of both sexes engaged in stamping the fruit with their bare feet, or sorting it into cases for the English and American markets; and a large proportion of the little naked urchins one sees from the steamboat on the journey up from Fao, racing each other along the mud-flats for the small silvery fish that are left stranded by the tide, bear unmistakable signs of their parentage in their thick lips, snub noses, and woolly hair, bleached almost white in the sun.

We stayed so long at the village that only a few hours

remained before sunset, and, beaching our raft near El Hatra, not ten miles lower down, we utilised the last glimmer of twilight in shooting for the pot. This was our last day on the kelek, for, when we pushed off next morning, the wind had veered round and completely neutralised the advantage of the current. Three hours were wasted in desperate endeavours to negotiate a small cataract. Time after time we were swept into a back eddy, and when at last success rewarded our efforts, and we had passed the point where the muddy stream receives the clear torrent of its tributary, not far from the spot where the Ten Thousand made their memorable crossing, the river broadens again and we remained almost stationary. Many of our air-skins, too, had been damaged by contact with the sharp edges of a curious table rock, which rises in mid-stream, bubbling over with a copious flow of liquid sulphur. We tried towing, but it did not answer very well, so we left the kelekji to break up the framework and return with the skins to Mosul, while we resumed the journey on horseback.

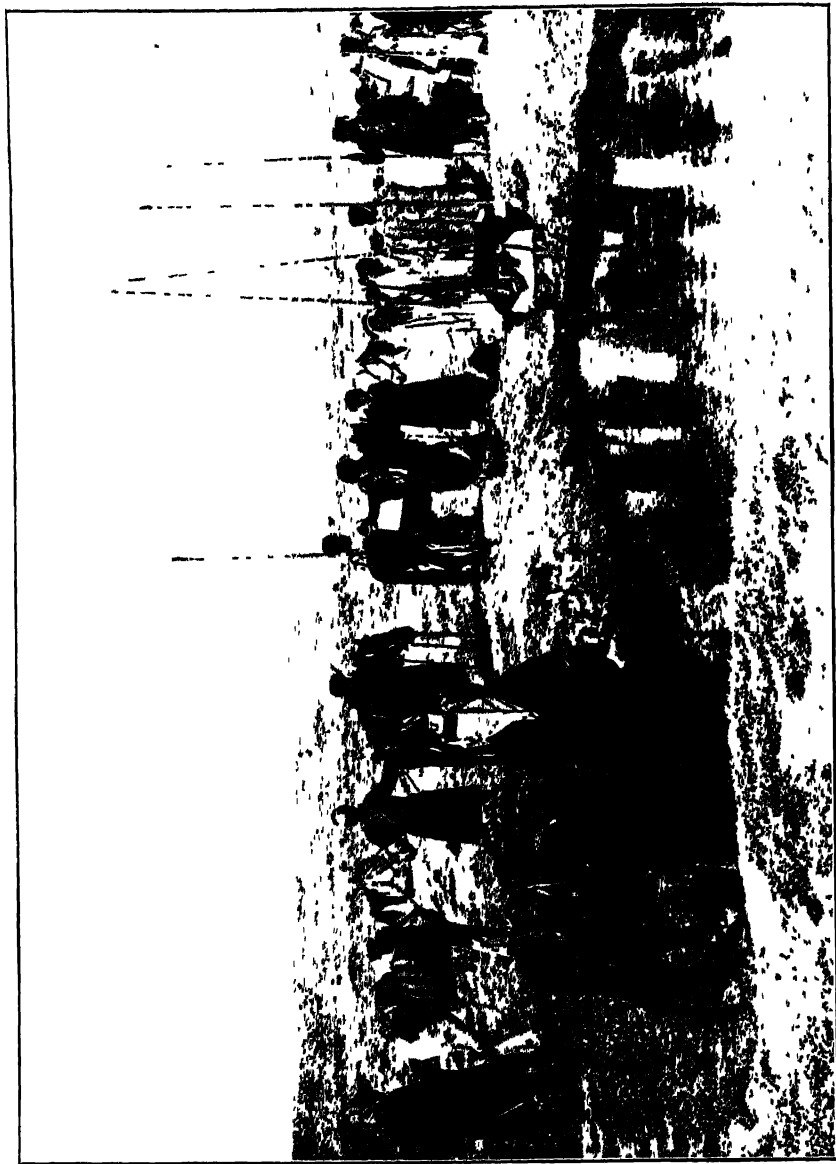
At noon we passed the bitumen springs of El Kujar, and were surprised to find that all the tins used to collect the fluid bore the Batum stamp. These springs are not infrequent in Mesopotamia, and if properly exploited by the Government, instead of being rented

to any one for about five beshliks¹ a day, might yield a considerable revenue. At Hit, on the Euphrates, the whole area surrounding the town is saturated with the inky, noisome-smelling ooze, which formed a staple of Babylonian industry as far back as the time of Herodotus, and is mentioned in the inscriptions of Karnak among the items of tribute paid to Thothmes III of Egypt. We camped in another fellaheen settlement on the bank, and after four hours' ride next morning across a low rocky ridge reached the broad jungle-covered plain of Kaleh Shergat. Within sight of the mounds there was a large Arab encampment, and the Sheikh Humadah, a majestic old patriarch, insisted on our taking coffee with him in his tent. It was easily recognised by the great spear planted upright against the black awning, and we squatted down on a Kurd carpet in the middle of the family ring, while our host reclined opposite against the centre pole. In a cavity scooped out of the sandy floor smouldered the embers of a fire of camel-thorn and tamarisk, and over it the carefully selected berries were slowly roasted in a long spoon of wrought iron, a product of the bazaars of Deir el Zor. The sun was very hot, and we were not sorry to rest awhile before proceeding to the ruins. We

¹ A beshlik = 5 piastres

had lost one of our horses from cramp, an accident common in these parts owing to the sudden changes of temperature, which occasionally sinks at night as low as 22° Fahrenheit, and our hosts sold us a substitute, a much better animal, at the moderate price of fifty-six shillings. A few of them joined our expedition, and amused themselves during the short ride in futile endeavours to spear an old boar which they had started in the thick and prickly scrub. A few days later they gave us better proof of their prowess by transfixing a small leopard, which they afterwards ate for supper. These leopards are almost the only large wild animals, except the ubiquitous jackal and gazelle, that survive in the country where the troops of Cyrus found the wild ass and the ostrich, and the kings of Assyria hunted the lion and the elephant. The wild ass is still occasionally met with in the desert, though the only one I have seen was kept as a pet in a Pasha's house at Deir, and the extinction of the lion is an event of yesterday. Tavernier saw two as far north as Anah in the seventeenth century, and they are fairly common now on the upper reaches of the Karun river. I believe the last that were seen on the western side of the frontier were a pair that had been stranded on a sandbank near Gurna, about

WELL IN THE DESERT



ten years ago, and were promptly surrounded and shot.

Kaleh Shergat is the customary camping-ground of the Shammar Arabs, and a small garrison of Turkish soldiers is stationed on the mound to keep them in order, but at the time of our visit the tribe had not yet left its summer quarters in the Sinjar. The ruins are disappointing. Indeed, no site of the kind exhibits such sparse relics of its original occupants. There are a few crumbling walls and one or two tunnels, which seem to be borings in a solid brick platform rather than passages, but I found only one brick bearing any cuneiform characters, and the quantity of *débris* which litters the irregular surface consists almost exclusively of broken fragments of the vivid blue and green glazed pottery of the Sassanian and Parthian epochs, of which such masses may be seen for miles round the Birs Nimrud, and at many points right up to the Roman boundary at Der Kaim. The only uninjured pieces I have seen belonging to this period were a beautifully shaped basin and pitcher, not unlike those still used at Baghdad, which I bought at the foot of the Birs from some Arabs who had accidentally unearthed them while digging a grave. Systematic exploration would doubtless bring to light treasures of the greatest

historical interest, for I was assured by the commander of the garrison that a large barrel-cylinder had been extracted by an Arab shortly before, and despatched to Constantinople. It is deplorable to think how many invaluable records must be either dispersed or destroyed in the course of these desultory and piratical excavations.

We had determined to take a different route back in order to see the ruins of El Hathr, which are situated in the desert half-way between Shergat and Mosul, and as the wells in this direction are few and far between, and strongly impregnated with sulphur, it was necessary to carry water with us in skins. The first evening we bivouacked in a dry nullah close to a shapeless tumulus, which was largely composed of bricks, but none were inscribed. Soon after midnight a sudden clatter of hoofs threw our Arabs into a state of the wildest excitement. They made sure that it was the Shammar, who were raiding the camp, but the attacking force proved to be nothing more alarming than two riderless donkeys, which they gratefully appropriated.

It was not till the afternoon of the second day that we sighted the ruins, and monotonous as had been the utter barrenness of the rolling desert over which for so many hours our horses had plodded in the scorching

sun, its very desolation lent an added charm to the stately pile of mouldering walls and palaces of this lonely city of the dead. The remains at Ani are better preserved and far more beautiful, but Ani is still surrounded by the living remnants of its ancient population, whereas here the only signs of life are the vultures wheeling overhead and the blue doves that nest in the nooks and crannies of the temple. Once only have I seen ruins as impressive from the character of their surroundings, and in themselves incomparably more splendid, and that was when, after a weary journey of five days across the Euphrates desert from Deir, I caught the first glimpse of the ruddy sun-smitten columns and massive masonry of the palace platform of Palmyra. Wonderful as those of El Hathr appear at a distance, they have little intrinsic beauty to recommend them on a closer inspection. Not much is known of their history except that they mark the seat of an Arab dynasty under the suzerainty of Parthia,¹ that they twice resisted successfully the Roman armies in the reigns of Trajan² and

¹ According to Rawlinson, Phene Spiers, and Fergusson Layard describes them as Sassanian.

² El Hathr surrendered to Trajan on the occasion of his outward march to the conquest of Babylon and Ctesiphon, A.D. 116, but soon after triumphantly reasserted its independence.

Severus, and that by the close of the third century they were already deserted. The area, three miles in circumference and one mile in diameter, is enclosed by a wall of immense thickness, protected by a ditch and rampart, and strengthened at frequent intervals by square bastions. These are now almost entirely demolished, but the bare husk of two isolated towers within the enclosure remains intact. A number of loopholes have been left for the archers,¹ and masonic marks occur on the square limestone blocks of which they are built. No architectural features distinguish the eastern portion of the ground, which is supposed to have been used as a burial-place, but the western half, which is protected by a second wall, is occupied by the remains of the palace-temple and of the buildings connected with it.

The palace itself faces east, and consists of seven long vaulted rooms, similar in design, though much inferior in size,² to the central domed hall of the

¹ Archers appear to have formed an important part of the garrison: A body of these troops was despatched by Barsemius, the Arab King of El Hathr, to the help of Pescennius Niger, and they are specially mentioned in the narrative of the stubborn resistance offered by the city to his rival Severus after the fall of Ctesiphon (Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. v. p. 335)

² The hall at Ctesiphon is 75 ft in height, 72 ft wide, and 115 ft deep (Fergusson)



THE PALACE EL HATHR

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Sassanian palace at Ctesiphon. The first, third, and sixth, counting from the southern end, are considerably larger than the intervening ones,¹ and the three northernmost are supposed from the feminine designs of their ornamentation, and from the fact that they alone communicate directly with the temple behind, to have been assigned to the women. The external arches, which spring from round pilasters, have nearly all fallen in. The smaller halls, and the large one at the southern extremity, have apartments opening into them at the back, and are entirely destitute of sculpture.² The others have human masks carved in bold relief upon square pilasters which are crossed by a cornice running the whole length of the hall, and decorated with a simple egg and leaf moulding. In one instance the design is varied by a series of brackets in the form of human-headed bulls cut off at the shoulder. There is no trace of windows, which were in all probability rendered unnecessary by the artifice of leaving the front exposed, as in the case of the audience-chambers of Xerxes and Darius at Persepolis and Susa. Directly opposite these

¹ 90 ft long, 35 ft broad, 60 ft. high, as compared with 30 ft. long, 20 ft broad, 30 ft. high.

² The doors leading from one apartment to another were purposely made disproportionately small to avoid weakening the intermediate walls (Fergusson).

halls is another vaulted structure, at the entrance of which stands a single lofty column, and beyond it the remains of a fine archway carved with a frieze of small human heads. The northern flank of the palace faces a confused jumble of masonry, which may have formed the guard-rooms and lodgings of the retainers. It is traversed by a long flight of stairs leading to the roof, where there are evidences of an upper story. A single round archway on the western side forms the main entrance to the sacred precincts, which were dedicated to the sun and famed for the richness of their treasures. Round the 'cella' itself, a square of forty feet, runs a vaulted corridor, lighted by two windows under the roof at the south-west and north-west corners. It can only be entered by a low square doorway opposite the opening in the wall of the women's apartments, for another on the same side has been purposely built up. The frieze above the lintel is richly carved with winged griffins and bulls facing one another, with the sun between their fore-paws. The interior is quite plain, and the roof has fallen in, burying the floor to a depth of several feet.

The remaining stages of the return journey over the same featureless country, broken only by the low line of the Sinjar to the west, it would be wearisome to

describe. Not till we were within six hours of Mosul did we pass a single human habitation, and at the first village we parted from Sheikh Faruq and his friends, who had accompanied us from an encampment near Nimrud, but dared not enter the town for fear of falling into the clutches of their numerous creditors. They were the last to leave of the many contingents that had joined us, glad as children of any novel experience, and tempted by the prospect of a modest backsheesh ; and the only self-invited follower that passed with us through the gates was a mongrel terrier that rejoiced in the incongruous name of Semiramis, and having struck up a firm and lasting friendship with Haturi, our Syrian cook, at Shergat, never left us until a month later we arrived at Aleppo.

CHAPTER X

MOSUL TO DIARBEKR

DECEMBER had already set in, and it was not too early to begin thinking about our departure. I had on a previous occasion, when returning from Persia, crossed at about the same time of year from Baghdad to Damascus, following the Euphrates from Hit to Deir, and then striking south through the desert. It was an experience which I was rather fearful of repeating, for although the biting wind which then blew in my teeth day after day from the west seems mainly to confine itself to the river valley, the concomitant discomfort of incessant rain is one which prevails pretty generally over the whole country during the early winter months. On the whole, as it turned out, we were very lucky, for in the course of the five weeks occupied by our journey we had only one of wet weather. But it was not so easy to leave Mosul as it seemed, for the supply of zaptiehs had run short, and the authorities would not hear of our starting without them. A number had been sent to accompany the new Pasha from the Sinjar, and a smaller

body was needed to escort the outgoing Vali, who, according to etiquette, must leave the town before his successor arrived. The few that remained had received no pay, and the treasury was well-nigh exhausted. Consequently some time elapsed before the matter was finally arranged, and we were allowed to proceed.

For three days after crossing the spurs of the Jebel Sinjar west of the town, until it reaches Chil Agha, the road runs through desert country, roamed over by numerous herds of gazelle, and dotted with an amazing quantity of mounds which testify to the existence in former times of a teeming population. Many of them probably mark the site of comparatively late towns of the Parthians and Arabs, and it is rare to find any old fragments upon the surface. But on the top of one in the vicinity of Chil Agha I picked up an uninscribed clay cone of the kind which has been found in such extraordinary quantities at Nippur and Mukeir.

At certain times of day, especially in the earlier part of the afternoon, it is often difficult to convince oneself that one is not traversing a country half under water. In the Egyptian desert the mirages are less common and more transient than those in Mesopotamia, where I have ridden for hours within view of what seemed to be an interminable stretch of gleaming marshes; while along

the banks of the Euphrates it frequently happens that on nearing a village you find it to all appearance completely inundated. On the other hand, the effects are almost always monotonous and colourless as the limestone surface of the plain. I have never seen any half so beautiful as one which I passed on the caravan track between Tamiyeh and Memphis—a small lake fringed with palms, and reflecting in its blue depths the rounded outline of a range of golden sandhills.

Unless you are wearing riding-boots, it is well in these parts to look carefully where you walk, for snakes abound, and some of them are excessively venomous. Once I happened to look down, the moment after my horse had stepped across a long, thin, flat-headed brute, mottled green and black, that was lying coiled up asleep in the sun, only just in time to warn the zaptieh who was walking close behind. During our journey from Deir to Palmyra the year before, it used to be a favourite occupation of our men to set fire to the dry tamarisk shrubs above the snake holes, and the moment the reptile darted out, to sever its head with one deft stroke of their swords.

Soon after leaving the desert we entered the rich brown plain, which is dreary enough in winter, though it must present a very different aspect when clothed in its

spring vesture of waving corn and gorgeous hyacinths and anemones. The villages are mostly inhabited by Kurds or Jacobite Syrians, but many had been sacked by the Tai Arabs and abandoned. This circumstance on one occasion, when our muleteers had surreptitiously slit the skins and drunk the contents, put us to no little inconvenience, for our zaptiehs assured us that they knew of a convenient camping-ground where water could be obtained and chopped straw for the horses, but when we reached the place it was only to find a few roofless and empty hovels, and neither rope nor bucket with which to draw from the wells. Another time on nearing one of these villages at nightfall we saw moving about it, and obviously on the lookout, a little posse of mounted Arabs. As we had met a caravan not long before, which had just been robbed, we made up our minds that the same kind attentions awaited ourselves. However, it was clear from their excitement and commotion that they had already observed us, and there was nothing to be done but to show a bold front and go on. As they remained together in a group watching us as we passed, but made no attempt to molest us, our 'onbashi' rode up to them and inquired what they were doing. They replied by asking him who we were, to which he

answered, with a ready mendacity, that we were English consuls travelling to Mardin, and that our party was strongly armed. They said they had no intention of interfering with us. but that, seeing our Turkish escort, they had feared we might have come to attack them. The fact was, they were engaged in a feud with the Shammar, and having beaten off the first assault were hourly expecting another. This anticipation was no doubt realised next day, for as we sat at noon eating our lunch in a village perched upon a slight elevation, we watched the Arabs for over an hour filing across the plain in ones and twos armed with their rifles and long nodding lances from the direction of the Sinjar. When about a day's distance from Mardin a band of some twenty zaptiehs, met us on their way to the scene of the disturbance. But the Government, though they made a show of activity, did not seem to be excessively anxious to interfere. Perhaps they doubted their ability to do so successfully. Perhaps they argued that they could derive nothing but advantage from letting the two troublesome tribes fight it out between themselves, or were genuinely concerned for our safety. At all events the officers informed us that the mutessarif, hearing that we were on the road, had left it to his discretion to proceed against the belligerents, or to

offer us the protection of his company. This was quite unnecessary, and we told him so, for our escort was large enough already; but he was clearly not consumed with military ardour, and notwithstanding all our entreaties to the contrary, insisted on returning with us to Mardin.

Want of pugnacity is not a fault or virtue commonly attributable to his class. Their natural tendency is all the other way, and the most unpleasant situation I have ever found myself placed in was due to the wholly gratuitous aggressiveness of my zaptiehs. It happened in this way. We were leaving Palmyra at daybreak, and the caravan with most of the men had gone ahead while I remained behind for a few minutes to take a hurried sketch of the ruins. Suddenly the silence was broken by the sharp crack of a rifle followed by a perfect volley of reports, and an Arab appeared galloping full tilt towards me. He proved to be a sheikh of the Anazeh tribe, who was riding peaceably north with a rifle slung across his shoulder when he encountered our party. Now the Arabs are not supposed to carry firearms, though many of them do, and the offence in this instance was aggravated by the fact that upon the forbidden weapon was the Government mark, which seemed to show that it had been

stolen. The zaptiehs, remarking this, forthwith summoned him to stand, but he paid no attention, and digging his spurs into his horse fled precipitately towards Palmyra with the Turks on their broken-down mules full cry in his wake. Turning sharply in the saddle he deliberately fired at his pursuers over his shoulder and missed. They returned the compliment with equally bad aim, and in a few seconds he was already out of range of their bullets. Unluckily for him, three of the men had stayed behind with me, and before I had had time to realise the situation or say a word to restrain them, he had passed us within a distance of ten yards, and his horse receiving a shot full behind the shoulder rolled with him stone dead head over heels like a rabbit.

He was not much hurt—nothing worse than a bad bruising, but the only attention the zaptiehs paid to him was to divest him of his abba as well as the rifle, which they carried off in triumph, leaving him to make his way back as best he could on foot to the village. The dragoman, a Baghdadieh, was as white as a sheet and shaking with terror. He had been waylaid by the Arabs on a previous journey, and was certain that before a day had elapsed they would muster in force to avenge the insult offered to their chief. ‘They will send all

round to-day,' he said, 'and to-morrow they will catch us—five hundred—one thousand—five thousand of them!' The onbashi alone maintained a serene composure. Nothing could be more to his liking, he said. Times had been so dull lately, and a brush with the Arabs would be a most agreeable break in the monotony. Neither threats nor expostulations had the slightest effect on him. We knew that the main body of the Anazeh, or at any rate a very large number of them, were encamped at Sikhneh, for we had passed them not long before with their countless flocks of sheep and goats scattered over the green belt of the oasis. There was a chance therefore that by pressing on we might get beyond the open desert before they collected in sufficient numbers to attack us; but the zaptiehs pleaded the fatigue of their horses and refused to hurry in the least. That same evening a messenger arrived at the little khan at Beida, where we had taken up our quarters, bringing a message from the governor at Palmyra with whom the sheikh had lodged his complaint, that the rifle and abba must be returned, in which case the loss of the horse would be condoned. The dragoman, much relieved by the turn which events had taken, reported that the zaptiehs had complied with these demands, and we set off next morning feeling

that we had got out of the business more easily than we had a right to expect. An hour later, as the sun rose over the spurs of the Anti-Lebanon to our right, we saw the glint of its rays upon the lances of some two hundred Arabs riding slowly along the foot of the corresponding range about five miles away. The onbashı at once called a halt, for the camels and baggage mules were straggling far in the rear, and meanwhile told his men to look to their rifles and get their cartridges ready. The Bedouin had also halted, and for full twenty minutes they remained stationary, watching us, apparently undecided what to do next. At last, to the great disappointment of the sergeant, they began to move slowly back, and though the zaptiehs mounted guard by turns round our tent every night in the expectation that they might return under cover of the darkness, we never saw them again. If they ever contemplated an attack, they probably hoped to take us by surprise, and having, so far as we could see, no rifles themselves, did not wish to run the risk of losing several lives in a charge. It was not till all prospect of a fray was over that our own men confided to us the information that the sheikh's rifle had never been restored.

About thirty miles from Mardin stands the once

important city of Nisibis, now a mere collection of crumbling mud houses and the residence of a kaimakam. It is a place of great antiquity, dating back to Assyrian times, and in the course of the protracted struggle between the Romans and Persians it bore the brunt of several memorable sieges. Captured by Trajan, it was afterwards, in 217 A.D., the scene of a brilliant victory won by the Parthian Artabanus over the legions of Macrinus, which forced Rome to purchase peace at the price of an enormous ransom. For a short period under the reign of Severus it enjoyed the privileges of a Roman colony, but in 241 was again besieged and taken by Sapor I., when, according to the account of their own historians, the walls fell down in answer to the prayers of the Persians. Reverting to its old masters it was thrice invested by Sapor II. in 338, 346, and 350, and in spite of the ingenious device by which the monarch banked up the Mydonius and formed a lake round the town that he might float his engines up to the walls, it defied all his efforts, and was finally saved by the direct intervention of God, who in answer to the prayers of His servant St. James, the great opponent of the Arian heresy, sent a swarm of flies that stung the horses to frenzy, and put to flight the armies of the infidel. But the days of

Rome's empire were already numbered, and after the death of Julian, the city, which had proved itself impregnable to direct assault, and which for two hundred years had formed the strongest outpost on her eastern frontier, was tamely surrendered by Jovian to the Persians. The only vestiges of the Roman occupation which remain above ground are a few columns of the Corinthian order, and the beautiful Jacobite church of St. James, which belongs to the reign of Justinian. It was originally cruciform, but the southern arm has been completely destroyed, and the interior now consists only of a domed nave lately restored, and one side aisle, beneath which, in a tiny vault lit by a single lamp, lies the body of the Saint. The vine-leaf tracery round the three doors leading into the northern aisle is very fine, and much resembles the carving over the entrance of the Temple of the Sun at Palmyra.

At the foot of the Tur Abdin hills, fifteen miles off, are the ruins of another Roman stronghold, Dara, or Anastasiopolis as it was called after its imperial founder, who fortified it as a bulwark against the inroads of the Persian Kobad. A detailed account is given of its defence by Procopius, from which Gibbon has borrowed his description; and traces of the walls as well as many of its public buildings and

elaborate irrigation works still survive. Several of these, including a massive tower at the southern approach, and seven long semi-subterranean vaults of brick-work ranged alongside of one another and apparently intended for baths, are in a fair state of preservation. But the most remarkable is a gigantic hall some fifty feet below the surface of the ground, the vaulted roof of which is supported by three lines of colossal square pillars.¹ The only approach is by a long flight of stairs built of marble, and there is no indication of the purpose for which it was originally intended. That Dara was not merely a garrison town, but the residence of a wealthy class accustomed to luxurious surroundings, is shown by the quantity of highly polished diamond-shaped tiles of pink and white marble which to-day forms the mosaic flooring of many of the Kurdish hovels.

Between Mardin and Jezire—where there is a considerable deposit of coal, formerly worked for the Baghdad steamers—stretches a low ridge of dolomite rock ending at Diarbekr in a strata of black basalt, which in the palmy days of the Assyrian empire was quarried and transported to Mosul to form the polished

¹ Badger gives the measurements of the hall, viz, one hundred and twenty feet high, sixty long, and forty wide. Our guide knew nothing of the existence of any such subterranean passage as that to which he alludes.

door sockets of Sennacherib's palace. The hill population is mainly Christian and well armed, and owing to the feudal traditions which still prevail among them, they not infrequently range themselves on opposite sides in the cause of one Moslem sheikh against another.

A well-engineered road fringed with olives and fig-trees gnarled and blackened with age has been recently carried as far as the edge of the plain from the rocky eminence on which Mardin is situated. Its gleaming fronts of white limestone rise tier above tier to the foot of the cliffs upon which the ruined castle stands, and few streets in the oldest quarters of Naples can show anything half so picturesque as the fretted balconies and carven doorways that line its narrow ladder-like alleys. Our approach had been announced beforehand, and outside the gates we met Mr Andrews, the American missionary, Abdul Raffur, the president of the Belidié,¹ Abdul Kadir Chelebi, our future host, and a number of the medjliss waiting to escort us to the mutessarif. We found him very unwell from a severe attack of asthma, in a splendid house newly erected at the expense of the municipality, with a fine Italian balustrade copied from one in the Capuchin

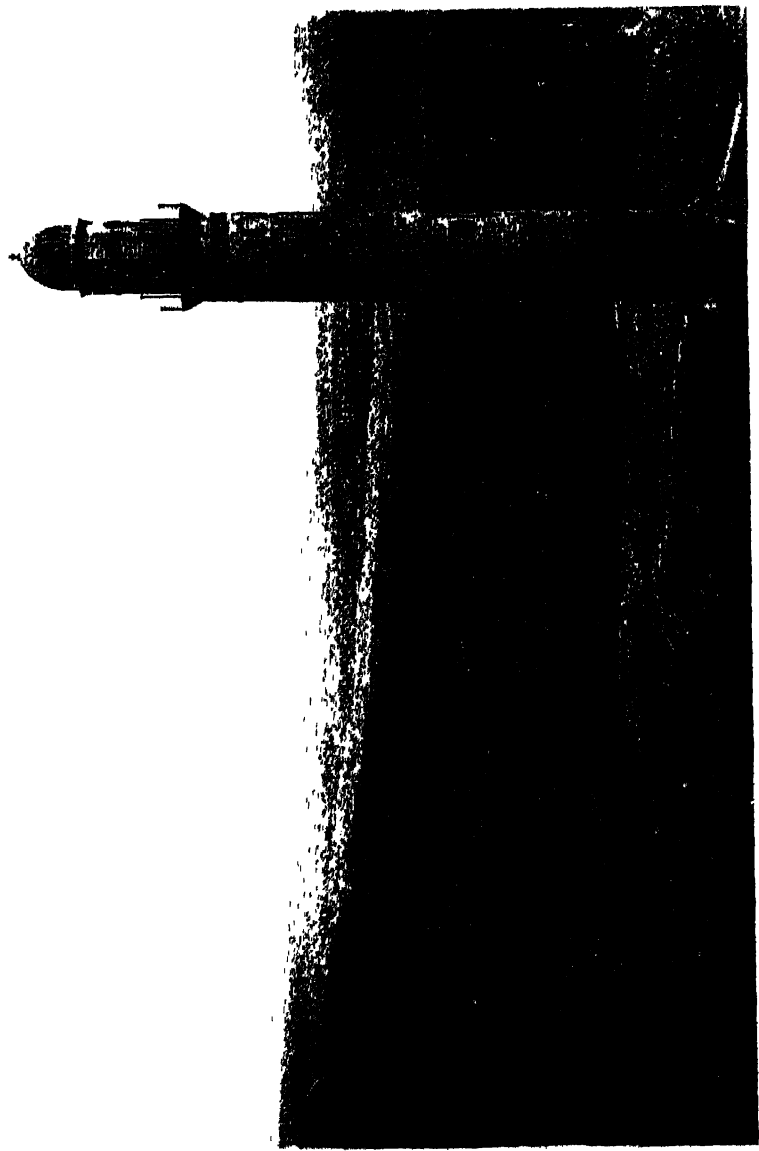
¹ Municipality.

monastery. He had applied for another appointment in the hope of arresting a constitutional tendency to consumption which had rapidly developed itself of late, and the prospect of his departure was viewed by everybody with regret.

The population of Mardin is less fanatical than that of any other town in the interior, and the Christians who form more than half live in perfect harmony with their Mussulman neighbours. But a possible element of disturbance always exists in the presence of large numbers of Kurds in the surrounding districts, who might co-operate with their friends in the town, and it was due in a great measure to the active measures taken by the governor in garrisoning with a strong force the premises occupied by the mission, that a threatened attack at the time of the massacres proved happily abortive, although the rioters succeeded in pillaging the monastery of Deir el Zaferan five miles to the east. After a brief exchange of compliments, preluded by the usual refreshments in the shape of 'arak,' coffee, and cigarettes, we made our way to Chelebi's house on the lower slopes of the hill, and divested ourselves of our travel-stained attire preparatory to seeing the numerous visitors who promptly called to pay their respects. The divan in which we

sat to receive them was a handsome room profusely decorated with carving, and displaying a curious miscellany of illuminated texts from the Koran, European gimcracks, and rare old china. The centre was occupied by a large stove, and all along the walls were little arched recesses containing books and raki glasses. Our own apartment was just opposite, and the intervening passage which served for a dining-room was screened off by two high glass doors, removable in the hot weather, from the broad stone balcony which commanded a magnificent view of the boundless expanse of plain below.

During the few days of our visit the house was always full of callers, for Chelebi was a prominent member of the medjliss, and Abdul Raffur, who assisted him to entertain us, was not only mayor, but a person of exceptional popularity with all classes in the town. He had seen much of the world too, and enjoyed the royal favour in his youth, for, during the brief reign of Sultan Murad, whom he once accompanied to England, he had filled the post of librarian at the palace. Removed to Mardin on the accession of Abdul Hamid, he had distinguished himself by assiduous devotion to municipal affairs, and won not only the confidence of his colleagues but the friendship of the



VIEW OF THE PLAIN FROM MARDIN

Patriarch of Antioch, the head of the Jacobite Syrians. It was to his house that he took us the morning after our arrival, on mules gaily caparisoned with velvet saddles embroidered in silver, and the two old gentlemen made a most picturesque appearance as they sat side by side, surrounded by priests in blue robes fingering their amber rosaries, and nodding their black and green tarbushes over the fragrant fumes of their long chibouks. The patriarch, after expatiating at great length on the many virtues of his companion, unbosomed himself of a matter which had long been on his mind. He had written to the Secretary for India, imploring him to give directions to the Government of the Viceroy, that they should officially proclaim him the only recognised head of the Syrians in the dependency, and had, of course, received the reply that the Government could not depart from their established rule of strict neutrality in regard to these ecclesiastical disputes. It was impossible to persuade him that this was no mere excuse to cover an attitude unfriendly to his own claims. He could not comprehend how any Government could really hold itself aloof from questions affecting the spiritual interests of those under its rule, and if the Porte had complied with his request and issued a 'firman' establishing his

official position, the refusal of England to do the same must be due to a desire to discountenance his authority. Another circumstance which caused him much perplexity was a letter which had arrived a few weeks before from America, written by the members of some religious fraternity, and acquainting him with their decision to confer upon him the order of the Crown of Thorns. He was obviously delighted with the prospect of receiving such a distinction, but rather troubled by the fact that the decoration had never arrived.

The church of the Arbaim, which stands opposite the house on the other side of the courtyard, is a low gloomy building which contains little of interest except a fine silk curtain before the altar, and a lovely little carved casket of silver that stands upon it. From the sides of the massive pillars which support the roof are hung a number of ludicrous modern paintings representing various scriptural subjects with all the grotesqueness of mediæval realism. The only really beautiful building in Mardin is a mosque that stands on a high ledge overlooking the town. The entrance door is adorned with texts from the Koran, carved in relief, and twined together in the most exquisite patterns, while from the lovely little colonnade that faces the plain the eye wanders over a stretch of more

than seventy miles, as level and unbroken as the open sea.

Large hoards of coins are frequently unearthed by the plough, and though the collector must be on his guard against forgeries, especially in the case of the silvers of Alexander and Philip of Macedon, which are turned out in vast numbers and imported from Smyrna, he may often pick up genuine gold pieces of the later Roman Empire. Assyrian and Persian cylinders also find their way into the bazaars, and I obtained one of the largest I have ever seen from a priest of the Catholic Armenians. One evening, a friend of Chelebi's appeared with a gigantic weight of black basalt, in the shape of a duck's head, inscribed with the name 'Ikla Rammanu,' in cuneiform characters, which I subsequently carted with infinite difficulty to Aleppo on a donkey chartered specially for the purpose. This gentleman, who stayed to dinner, enjoyed the distinction of being a Farmasoon (Freemason), and had been initiated into the mysteries at Urfah; but I have never met a member of the brotherhood less capable of concealing its secrets. Like an Arab, who told me at Hillah that he cared for nothing in life but his mare and his raki, our friend was an incurable tipster. At first I attributed his excessive hoarseness to a very

bad cold, and politely expressed a hope for his speedy recovery. 'Inshallah,' replied Abdul Raffur, who never drank anything but water, and he hastily tried to change the current of the conversation to less dangerous topics. But the patient was nothing abashed. 'It is a bad cold,' he said, 'but I shall never get rid of it. My hekim tells me it is all due to the amount of raki I drink, and I do it just the same every night of my life.' But then he was a Farmasoon, and Abdul Raffur, though a very holy man, was not.

For two whole days the rain descended in torrents, and travelling became excessively tedious, the horses sinking inches above their fetlocks with every step they took in the rich red loam that covers the rolling ground between Mardin and Diarbekr. The city is visible a long way off, as it stands high on a ridge of black basalt above the western bank of the Tigris, and its countless minarets and immense girth of walls and towers, constructed of the same sombre material, show up like a mass of carved ebony against the snowy background of the Taurus. The river flows with a sudden bend to the south-west, beneath a noble bridge of pointed Saracenic arches, wide in the centre, and narrowing as they near the shores, on which

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the kelekjis beach their numerous rafts. We entered by the Mardin gate, fronting the cemetery, and threading the bazaars, which have been rebuilt and widened since their destruction by fire at the time of the massacres, dismounted at the new British Consulate, a pretty house built round a courtyard, in which two tame gazelle were disporting themselves in company with a large greyhound.

There is probably no other town in the world which retains so nearly the appearance it wore during the Roman occupation. Even the name by which it was then known survives in the modern designation, Kara Amid—Black Amida—and its subsequent masters have been content to leave the fact of their presence to be inferred from the Greek, Cufic, and Arabic inscriptions and heraldic carvings which they traced on the sides of its massive towers. Of these some are round, some square. The former occur principally on the western side, which fronts the level plain and the Kara Dagh, the latter on the northern looking towards Mush and Kharput. According to Buckingham, who quotes the authority of Tavernier, they number sixty-two in all, corresponding to the disciples of Christ.

Tradition ascribes the foundation of the city to Shah Amurath, a king of the first Persian dynasty, but its

fortifications, which extend for three-quarters of a mile each way, and the great trench that surrounds them, except on the river front, date from the reign of the Emperor Constantius. It was first reduced after a long siege in 359 by Sapor, who gained entrance by means of a secret passage leading down to the Tigris, and though the Romans regained it after its cession to Persia by Jovian, it was recaptured by Kobad from Anastasius at the commencement of the sixth century. Again it reverted to the Empire, only to fall a hundred years later into the hands of the Arabs, and afterwards to be sacked by the hordes of Tamerlane and the victorious armies of the Persians, the Seljuks, and the Osmanli Turks.

Along the whole line of walls to the left of the Kharput gate a large number of reservoirs have been constructed to catch the rain, and a fine modern aqueduct conveys water to the town from the western streams. On the edge of the cliff stands a large medresseh or college overlooking the river, which can be seen from the windows of the serai, trailing its tortuous course for scores of miles over the broad and fertile flats. The valley to the south is one continuous stretch of mulberry gardens, which afford splendid covert for the woodcock that migrate here in

considerable numbers during the autumn, and a day in their thick undergrowth with a couple of beaters proved an agreeable variety after the rather monotonous pursuit of plover and sand-grouse to which we had recently become accustomed.

We had little time to spare for sight-seeing, and the bigotry of the natives, mostly Arab and Kurd half-breeds, makes it impossible in any case for a European to visit the interiors of the mosques. But it is almost worth the journey to Diarbekr to see the magnificent façades of the so-called 'Palace of Tigranes' which face the courtyard of the Ulu Jami (the great mosque). There is absolutely nothing to indicate the purpose of this building, which has been variously represented to be the remains of a Christian church built by the order of Heraclius in the seventh century, and an Armenian palace of the first; but whatever its history, few even of the best examples of Byzantine architecture can be compared with it either for beauty of design or richness of ornamentation. Passing under an archway, surmounted by a lion in high relief, you enter a large enclosure, in the centre of which stands a fountain with a covering supported by a circle of small columns running round the rim. To the left is the mosque, and opposite it, upon a low flight of steps,

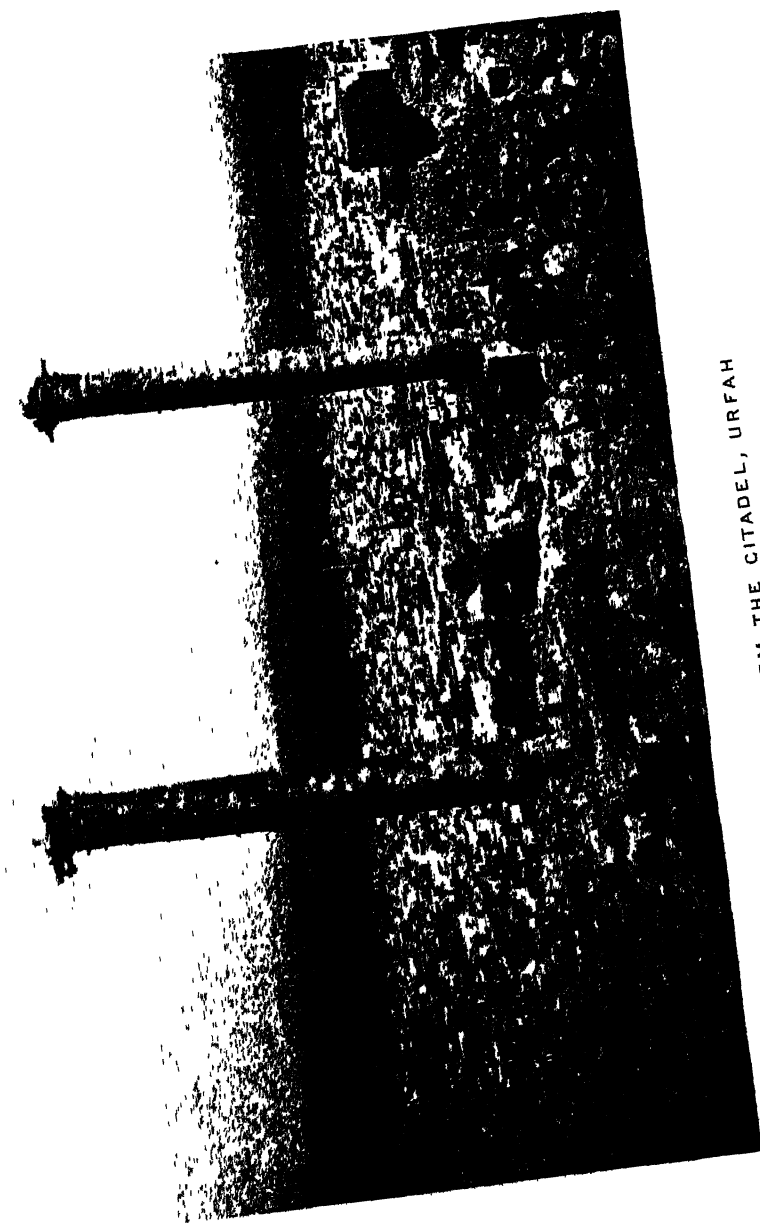
a line of florid pillars of which the superstructure is gone. Facing each other, on the other two sides, are lofty walls pierced by two rows of arches, one above another, which rest upon slender shafts of various coloured marble and porphyry. The upper ones are square, the lower pointed, and enriched with Corinthian capitals, and the whole surface is covered with the most ornate profusion of carven foliage and fruit. I thought it an amusing instance of the deference paid to public opinion by the Mohammedan hierarchy that when I asked leave of a mullah to photograph the buildings, he replied that I was welcome to do so provided only I retired out of sight of the crowd.

The history of the three days' massacre at Diarbekr in November 1895 is interesting chiefly because it seems to have been a more or less spontaneous protest on the part of the inhabitants against the action of the Sultan. When the news came that he had decided to sanction the reform scheme, a letter was sent to Constantinople declaring that unless a satisfactory reply was returned, summary vengeance would be taken on the Christians. This may have been a plot carefully concocted to disguise the fact that the Government had itself incited the disorders; but if this were really the case, it is probable that the same tactics would have

been employed elsewhere. It is more likely that the responsibility rests with the mullahs, and that, finding in the bigoted Vali Aniz Pasha a willing accomplice, they determined to forestall matters by striking a swift and decisive blow. The Armenians had apparently by some means or other received intimation of their design, for on the eventful morning the quarter in which they usually carried on their business was deserted, and their bishop as well as the French consul went at once to the Konak to acquaint the governor with their apprehensions of impending trouble. Both were solemnly assured by him that their fears were groundless, and that the Armenians by showing their suspicion were directly provoking a disturbance. On the bishop's departure to reassure his people and persuade them to return to their customary avocations, the Vali must have proceeded without delay to the mosque where a vast crowd had already collected, and a large quantity of firearms had been distributed. The order was then given to begin, and the bazaars were surrounded and burned, the murderers throwing the bodies of many of their victims on the fire. Others, however, who had distrusted the official assurances and remained at home, flocked to the French consulate and the Capuchin monastery, where for three days they maintained a

stubborn and successful resistance. The surrounding villages were sacked by the Kurds, who carried off a large number of women, and although the Sultan sent orders for their release, the Vali pleaded that nothing could be done without a judicial inquiry, and as no witnesses dared to give evidence, the culprits have never been brought to justice.

It is scarcely conceivable that the Porte still supposes it possible to throw dust in the eyes of Europe with regard to facts of which so many foreigners have been eye-witnesses, and which few Moslems on the spot think it worth their while to deny. Nevertheless it is a fact that quite recently a circular was sent round to the governors of every Armenian vilayet, impressing upon them the necessity of convincing any traveller who might pass through, that the whole of the atrocities were committed by the Christians themselves !



VIEW FROM THE CITADEL, URFAH

CHAPTER XI

DIARBEKR TO ALEPPO

KARABAGCHE, the first stage on the Urfah road, is ten and a half hours by caravan from Diarbekr, and we had therefore arranged that the muleteers should start in advance of ourselves at daybreak. They were detained, however, for more than an hour because the gates were shut and the porter had lost the key! This naturally did not improve their temper, and they had not proceeded very far before they mutinied and refused to go on, so that the first thing we saw when we came came up with them at midday was a vociferous group watching the writhings of their ringleader in the grasp of an infuriated zaptieh, whose sword had just been broken by a kick from one of the mules. The road, after passing the Kara Dag, is a marvel even for Turkey. According to Murray's handbook, it is 'just passable for carriages throughout,' but if any vehicle ever accomplished the feat it must have been at the cost of the lives of its occupants. Even the riding horses are not mad enough to attempt to pick their

way over its rock-strewn and deeply fissured surface, when nature provides a broad stretch on each side, from which the obstacles are being gradually and laboriously removed to construct an artificial and impassable highway.

At Suverek, the only village of any importance, there is a fine rock with the remains of a castle built by the Counts of Edessa, and the neighbouring slopes are covered with gardens and vineyards. Two years ago it contained a considerable Christian population, which has been almost wiped out during the massacres, and the Kaimakam, who gave us lodgings in the Konak, had been dismissed from his former post near Baiburt in consequence of the exertions which he made there to keep order. On the afternoon of the fourth day after leaving Diarbekr, a long canter over level country brought us within sight of the smoky town of Urfah, lying on the higher ridges of the Jebel Nimrud above the Mardin plain, and we found an escort from Dedé Pasha, the mutessarif, waiting to conduct us to the house of a prominent member of the Medjliss.

Urfah, or, as it was called by the Greeks, from the copious spring which supplies it, Edessa ad Calirrhoen, has been erroneously conjectured to be the same as Ur, where Abraham received his first call, and Harran,

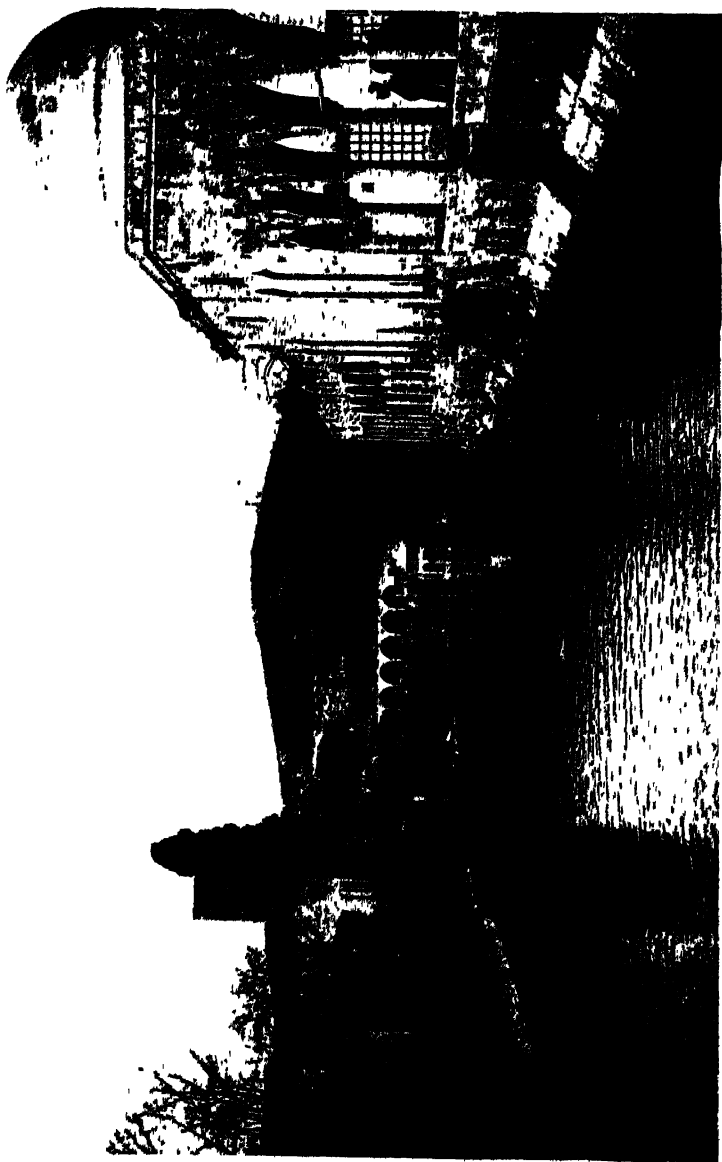
the 'City of Nahor,' to which he migrated. The sites of those two towns are now believed to have been at Mugheir in Chaldæa, and Harran, a small Arab village some six hours distant from Urfah, which, under the Roman name of Charræ, witnessed the crushing defeat of Crassus by the Parthians. Urfah itself was the Antiocheia of the Macedonian Seleucus and the capital of the Osrhoenic kingdom of the Abgari from the beginning of the first century A.D. until 217, when the last of its tributary princes was sent in chains to Rome and it was raised to the status of a colony. During the Middle Ages it contained a famous school of Nestorian theology, and after its capture by Baldwin in the First Crusade was ruled for about forty years by his successors, the Counts of Edessa, from whom it was wrested by the Saracens in 1144.

The old walls and towers still surround the western side of the town and are carried from the northern ridge, on which most of the houses are built, across a narrow valley to the foot of a castle-crowned hill to the south. A deep rock-hewn trench surrounds it on two sides, and on the summit stand two gigantic columns three yards in diameter, studded with a quantity of bosses and bearing a Syriac inscription of Hadrian. A legendary account tells how they formed part of the

terrible machine constructed by Nimrud to hurl the Father of the Faithful into the furnace which he had kindled beneath; and the miracle which changed the fire into water has attached a peculiar sanctity to the Mosque of Ibrahim el Khaled which now occupies the spot. A wide marble paving runs along three sides of a great tank of clear running water, by which every pious passer-by lingers for a moment to scatter a handful of maize to the sacred carp that swarm in its transparent depths.¹ So great is their number and so voracious their appetite, that no sooner has the corn been thrown, or even a withered leaf fluttered in from the brink, than the whole surface instantly becomes a dense struggling layer of fish, fighting and jostling one another, utterly regardless of the fact that they are high and dry out of their native element. To catch them would be an unpardonable act of sacrilege, but I was assured that not a few unbelievers have filled a creel by stealth under the friendly cover of night. The northern side of the court is occupied by a small three-domed mosque, with a tall, tapering minaret; and a graceful Saracenic arcade leads into a delicious garden of pomegranate trees from the steps which line the water's edge. A little

¹ The veneration with which these fish are regarded is probably a relic of the old worship of Atergatis. Cf. the Dagon of Phœnicia and the Ea of Chaldæa.

MOSQUE OF ABRAHAM, URFAH



round white kiosque with a pillared gallery adjoining it projects at the western corner, and behind the wall that faces the mosque a lovely Italian-like campanile rises from the dark shadow of an ancient cypress. On the east side the water escapes into a second pool, from which it is conducted by numerous channels through the town. Many of the bazaars are sheltered with domed roofs and open into spacious caravanserais, where motley crowds may be seen at all hours of the day washing their linen in the courtyards, while in the verandah above the calico-printers carry on a flourishing industry. Outside the walls to the west the rocks have been perforated by a quantity of caves which are tenanted by a colony of Bosnian gypsies.

In the course of some building operations in the neighbourhood, the workmen lately came upon a subterranean vault which contained a large sculpture on one of the side walls. It is well preserved, and represents the reclining figure of a lady surrounded by a rude and irregular inscription in cursive character—an almost exact reproduction of one which is kept in the school at Palmyra. Fragments of the same art are found in great numbers over the whole district between the Euphrates and Damascus. There is a large collection in the house of an Arab sheikh at

Kurietein, the most remarkable of the figures being that of a curly-headed youth carrying a lamb in his arms and wearing a robe brodered with the characteristic vine-leaf pattern.

Tavernier, who saw the castle when it was apparently still inhabited, mentions the fine mosaics contained in its rooms ; and a magnificent piece representing, I believe, a number of persons seated at dinner, was unearthed closed to the serai at Urfah some years ago, but the authorities, with a solicitude for antiquities which they do not often display, have replaced the earth to prevent mutilation by the local vendors of curios.

The large mosque, the Olur Jamisi, which stands almost in the centre of the town, was originally a Christian church, and the courtyard is full of broken shafts and Corinthian capitals. Its tall square tower ending in a hexagonal belfry is now used as a minaret, and forms one of the most conspicuous and picturesque features of the place.

For many years to come the very name of Urfah will be inseparably associated in the minds of Englishmen with the recollection of that frightful episode, the burning of three thousand souls alive in the great Armenian Cathedral, which equals, if it does not sur-

pass, in horror the most ghastly catastrophes of the French Revolution or the Indian Mutiny. For two whole months, from the date of the first carnage in October 1895 until its renewal on the 28th of December, the city lay under the shadow of a Terror—none came out and none went in. The unhappy Armenians shut themselves into their houses, not daring to expose themselves in the bazaars or to risk again the little they had contrived to save from the previous loot of their shops. The order had gone forth that all arms were to be given up, and those who possessed none, finding it impossible to obtain credence for their denial, bought rusty and antiquated weapons for the purpose of surrendering them to pacify their oppressors. The necessities of life became so scarce that they were driven to procure them at extravagant prices from the armed patrol, which had been enlisted from the most ruffianly element of the mob; and every effort to communicate with Aleppo or Marash was defeated by the arrest of the messengers and the strict watch maintained by the authorities over the postal and telegraph departments.

Vague rumours of the intention of the Powers to intervene were circulated from time to time, and the victims, seeing the cords drawn tighter around them,

still buoyed themselves up with the belief that Christian Europe could not for very shame stand quietly by and see them butchered in cold blood. Every one knew what was coming, though none knew the hour at which the storm would burst. Miss Shattack, who was in charge of the Armenian mission, and the only foreigner in the town, had applied for leave to go to Marash, and no answer was returned till the very day of the outbreak. Then it was too late. All she could do—and she did it with a fearless heroism—was to shelter the wounded refugees that flocked in terrified crowds to the house. The preconcerted signals had already been given—a trumpet-blast from the barracks and the waving of a green flag from the minaret of a mosque. In a moment the troops ranged on the brow of the hill above the Armenian quarter burst through the gate, followed by a murderous rabble and a number of wood-cutters from the surrounding villages, who had been hired to hew down the doors with their axes. Separating themselves into three bands, with a precision that showed how carefully the attack had been organised, each marched down the street assigned to it, butchering every man they met, until the bugle sounded and they drew off for the night. At sunrise the signal was renewed, and the maddened populace,

rushing to the church in which a crowd of men, women, and children had collected to receive their last sacrament, piled masses of bedding saturated with kerosene under the gallery, and, blocking every avenue of escape, awaited the completion of the awful holocaust. Little wonder if many of the Turks themselves share the view expressed soon after by the wife of a prominent Mussulman in the town—'The matter is not at an end yet Allah does not permit such crimes as this to go unpunished.'

The most significant feature of these terrible events is not so much the obvious complicity of the local authorities, as in almost all the occurrences of 1895-96, but the elaborate precautions they took to prevent any communication being made either with the coast or with the central government, and the long delay which intervened between the two massacres. It is clear that if the Sultan had sent orders for the stern repression of any rising among the Armenians, he must have also given his subordinates to understand that he did not wish to be acquainted with the actual steps that were taken. The population of Urfa was peculiarly fanatical; they had interpreted the concessions of reform as amounting to an autonomy, from the benefits of which they alone were to be excluded, and

after the preliminary outbreak in October they were heard openly to express a regret that they had not been allowed to inflict so exemplary a punishment as their co-religionists in the other towns. The hesitation displayed by the officials, who had a perfect control over the populace, was probably due partly to the desire to obtain a colourable pretext by an overt act of rebellion on the part of the Armenians, and partly to the calculation of the mullahs that a well-timed demonstration would prove not only to Europe, but also to the Sultan himself, that public opinion would not tolerate his submission to foreign dictation.

It was no mere excuse that Abdul Hamid made when he warned the ambassadors of the danger of exciting the religious passions of his subjects; for although it is probably true that he never had any sympathy with the progressive policy of predecessors like Sultan Medjid, and regards the emancipation of the Lebanon which followed the promulgation of the Hatti Sherif as a type of the consequences which must inevitably result from a weak compliance with Western prejudice,¹ his natural predilection for a reaction which

¹ It must be borne in mind that the strict seclusion in which the princes of the blood, and more especially the heirs to the throne, pass their lives, and their consequent ignorance of the real state of affairs in the provinces, places them at the mercy of unscrupulous and venal advisers.

seems to him the only means of preserving Turkey for the Turks, is strengthened by a genuine fear of the priestly power that placed him on the throne to undo the work of Murad. Had the signatories of the Berlin Treaty consistently pressed for reasonable reforms, which should apply to all classes and creeds in the

It is instructive to read the reflections of Dr Badger on the probable operation of the 'Tanzimat, written nearly half a century ago. 'The tendency of the reforms,' he says, 'is to pave the way for the people to become more prosperous, and consequently more independent, and in the same ratio that they attain to this state will they become more impatient of control and more disposed to resist any species of aggression on the part of their rulers. The Turks have no hold whatever on the affections of the masses of the empire, on the contrary, they are cordially hated, not only by the Christians, but also by the Kurds, Yezidis, Druses, and Arabs, who could overthrow the Ottoman dynasty at a blow. The prejudices of religion and caste which separate these distinct races may perchance always prevent their combining to any such end, but it is by no means improbable that the attempt may be made, when once the better circumstances of the disaffected shall supply them with the means of effectually withstanding their feeble and degenerate masters. Hence it seems to me that in easing the yoke of servitude wherewith they have hitherto ruled their subjects, without making any adequate provision for the probable consequences of the immunities now granted to them, the Turks are arming their adversaries with weapons which they will not fail to use against them on the first favourable opportunity.'

The picture is, I think, overdrawn, and does not make sufficient allowance for the religious feeling which in Turkey supplies the binding force elsewhere created by the sentiment of patriotism. But it emphasises what is no doubt a possible danger, and one which can be easily exaggerated to excite the fears of the Sultan by his civil and spiritual counsellors. Nothing but a feeling of very serious uneasiness could have prompted the despatch of instructions to the military authorities at Aleppo, in February 1897, 'that they should pay the greatest attention, because the Moslems were joining the Armenians in the revolt against the Sultan'—(Consular reports.)

Empire, instead of making desultory protests at long intervals, in favour of a small and hated minority, they might have gradually created a popular sentiment, of which both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities would have been obliged to take account. As it is, they have only succeeded in conveying the impression to Mohammedans, that their interference is but an insidious prelude to the new Crusade which, according to an old prophecy universally believed, will in the end plant the Cross again upon the dome of St. Sophia,¹ while at the same time they have encouraged their protégés to expect a separate treatment which can never be accorded, instead of combining to demand rights and liberties which are as ardently desired by their fellow subjects as by themselves. Hundreds and thousands in the

¹ Some of these prophecies date back a long way. Caeri gives a very curious one in reference to the end of the world. 'It is said that the Turkish Emperor shall come as far as Rome and take it, that he shall make the Pope patriarch of Jerusalem, who sometime after shall profess the Mohammedan faith. Then Christ shall come and show the Christians their error in not having accepted the alcoran, and instruct them that the dove which came down from Heaven was not the Holy Ghost, but was Mahomet, who shall be thirty years upon earth and confirm the alcoran by new miracles. After that time the power of the Turks shall decline till they retire into desert Arabia, and then there shall be an end of the world. This their overthrow shall come from the people northward, which in the said prophecy is called "Caumies fer," i.e. yellow-haired sons. But the ruin of Constantinople shall happen in one Sultan Mehemet's time, and then the Turks shall be reduced to so few in number, that sixty Turkish women shall have but one husband between them.'

interior share the view once expressed to me by an exiled member of the Young Turkish Party 'We want reform, but we will not employ violence to win it, nor can we identify ourselves with men who take no pains to conceal their disloyalty, and who, having amassed large fortunes under our rule, are steadily working for its overthrow.' It is not so with the other Christian bodies. The Syrians have never preached revolution; they are very numerous in Urfah, and not a hair of their head was touched. If it was only the Greeks and Europeans who had escaped, it might plausibly be said that they owed their security to the protection of their consuls; but the Syrians are as defenceless as the Armenians, and yet care was expressly taken beforehand to warn them to shelter themselves in their churches, and not to stir out until the riots were over. I do not mean to imply that the great mass of the Armenians were implicated in the plots of the secret societies, which had for some months carried on an active propaganda in the neighbourhood of Aleppo, but they were believed to be traitors at heart, and, as in the case of the Nihilists and Jews in Russia, many who were entirely innocent themselves have been punished for the faults of others.

Unfortunately, as time goes on every circumstance

tends to confirm the Sultan in the course which Mr. Balfour has so aptly described as 'squandering the best assets of his country' by alienating the friendship and the support of Great Britain. The introduction of party controversy into the arena of foreign politics has been to a large extent responsible for the disaster which has attended all our efforts to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the Eastern question. The highest functionaries in Turkey comprehend little of Parliamentary government, and I have been solemnly told by one of them, I believe in perfect good faith, that Lord Salisbury had only to send a mandate to the House of Commons and they would endorse any proposal he chose to make. In his view the Prime Minister had gone out of his way to subscribe to the doctrines of Mr. Gladstone, doctrines long and stoutly opposed by the Conservative party, which amounted to nothing less than a general and irrational sympathy with revolution, however unjustifiable, and had deliberately broken the ties of friendship which had so long existed between the two countries. 'Every action of her old allies was now viewed by England from a hostile standpoint, and she it was who had put forth her most strenuous efforts to rob them of the legitimate fruits of the war which had been wantonly provoked by the Greeks. What alter-

native remained to them under these circumstances but to range themselves on the side of the only Power who, whatever her private aims might be, had declared that she at least would be no party to the creation of a new Bulgaria that should provide a rallying-point for the Mazzinis and the Kossuths of Europe?’

I quote this remark, not because it is borne out by facts, for it was the occupation of Egypt and not the agitation for reform that drove Turkey into an understanding with Russia, but because it accurately illustrates what I believe to be the view entertained by the average educated Turk of the dilemma in which his country is placed. He hates the Russians, he looks upon them as his natural enemy, and he is under no misapprehension that sooner or later he must fight them for the very existence of his Empire. But that day has not come yet, and meantime it is better to have a friend whose motives are understood, and who has never taken an inch of territory which she has not won in fair fight, than one who, under the pretext of disinterested support, has twice enriched herself with the spoils of her ally. Circumstances, too, have changed since the time of the Cyprus Convention: Russia has repudiated her treaty engagements with impunity, she has absorbed a stretch of territory as vast as the Empire of India, and

she is hand in glove with the very Power that helped us to humble her before Sebastopol. Even were the conditions of that Convention carried out to the letter, would England remain true to her promise? Is not the pious horror with which her statesmen ostentatiously wash their hands of the integrity of Turkey only an other instance of that 'unctuous rectitude' with which she discreetly veils her retreat?

If any public man in a speech from an English platform were to urge the necessity of maintaining the policy of Lord Beaconsfield, and at the same time criticise the Government of Lord Rosebery, because they hesitated, even before Lobanoff's momentous declaration, to send their ships to the Bosphorus and enforce the acceptance of their demands, he would probably be accused of a flagrant inconsistency. Yet, although neither of these views may be right, they are not in the least incompatible with one another, and the fact that many suppose them to be so only shows the want of foresight in their statesmanship. No doubt if our fleet had appeared off the Golden Horn the present Sultan would not have been pleased, but it would have taught him that we were not afraid either of him or of Russia, and that if he tried to ignore us he would do so at his peril. As it is, we have demonstrated to him that nothing will induce us to risk the

loss of an ironclad in the Dardanelles, or to take any step which might land us in a conflict with Russia. He may well be excused, therefore, for doubting whether in any case we should be of much service to him. Recent events in the Far East can only confirm that impression, for there, although our interests to some extent coincided with those of China, and she implored us to guarantee her against Muscovite aggression, as twenty years ago we guaranteed Turkey, we have wisely or unwisely shrunk from the task as one which is beyond our powers.¹ The circumstances are, of course, not the same, because if we had at Constantinople a government which was really friendly, instead of one which has masked with her batteries the southern entrance to the Straits in a manner which can only be interpreted as a menace to ourselves, we could strike a blow in the Euxine such as we cannot deal in the Gulf of Pechili. But it has long been the fashion to denounce the Crimean War as a stupid and useless blunder, which we should never think of repeating, and

¹ The assurance given in July 1898 of our determination to support China in resisting pressure inimical to the concession of privileges to our own nationals, does not necessarily commit us to aid her in repelling aggression by which our own interests are not directly or indirectly assailed. The writer does not wish to imply any dissent on his part from the Chinese policy of the Government, which is necessarily based on considerations of a wider character than those here dealt with. The above is simply an attempt to estimate the kind of inference which will be drawn by Turkish statesmen from a review of recent events.

the Sultan no doubt argues that, since the only motives which would ever have induced us to fight on his side would have been motives of self-interest, if we have already made up our minds to regard the advance of our great enemy upon the Persian Gulf as no longer incompatible with the security of India, or as one which we cannot prevent, nothing that he could do would prevail upon us to revert to our traditional policy.

It is easy to be wise after the event, and to see how different might have been the result had we taken measures in 1878 which, even if possible still, the effect of repeated atrocities upon public sentiment in England would make it exceedingly difficult to adopt. We ought never to have undertaken to defend Turkey in the face of foreign combinations without at the same time insisting that our officers should be given a free hand to reorganise and train her military and naval forces. The mere presence and influence of a number of our countrymen in the interior, apart from the strength which it would have added to the defence of the frontier, would have introduced a salutary discipline and change of feeling among the population which would have formed the surest guarantee against such outbreaks as those which have occurred during the last few years. Above all, the common-sense instinct

of army men brought into constant contact with the natives, and learning to understand them thoroughly, would have prevented them from lending any support to recommendations tinged with a pedantic and parochial radicalism which every one who has been long in the country knows to be ridiculously unsuited to its existing conditions.

The tract of desolate and rocky country which lies between Urfah and Charmelik, where we lodged the first night in a khan close to a high mound, is succeeded by a stretch of low-lying pastures. Then the road climbs again to the crest of the limestone range that lines the eastern bank of the river on which Birejik stands. The shelving ridge behind the town is covered with gardens and orchards, and the massive outline of its ruined castle stands out in bold relief against the dreary plains that abut on the winding sandy shores of the Euphrates to the north. In the face of the white chalk cliffs on each side of the approach a number of caves have been hollowed out, and are used by the natives for stabling their cattle. There is some fine carving over the main gateway, and the houses overlooking the stream have picturesque projecting lattices, but the streets and bazaars are more than ordinarily mean and squalid.

The bridge of boats, which gave to the place its old name of Apamea Zeugma, no longer exists, and the modern traveller who follows the route taken by the invading armies of countless nations in the past is ferried across with his mules in the clumsiest wherries imaginable. The bottom is flat like a punt, with a narrow platform for the steerer at the prow, which rises some ten feet above the water, provided with a gigantic rudder, while the stern sinks so low when the cargo is heavy as to be almost submerged. The boatmen, armed with poles of apparently unmanageable length, do little but keep the great hulk broadside to the current, which eventually drifts it to the further shore, to be towed higher up for the return journey.

Instead of following the direct road to Aleppo we rode for about six hours down the river in order to visit the mounds of Jerablus, which mark the site of the old Hittite capital of Carchemish. Of the date of its foundation nothing is known except that it may well have been prior to that of Babylon, since in 2200 B.C. we find it mentioned among the tributaries of the latter city, only half a century after its first appearance in history under the Karshite dynasty of Sumuabi. The expeditions of the earlier kings of the eighteenth dynasty of Egypt appear to have been mainly directed

against the southern stronghold of Kadesh, the modern Homs, on the Orontes, and though Thothmes III. carried his victorious armies as far as the Euphrates, and invested the fortress which commanded its passage, it was not until the rising power of Assyria in the ninth century came into conflict with the confederate tribes of the Hittites, who, as masters of Naharana, barred her passage to the East, that Carchemish became the principal object of foreign attack. The Pharaohs had never succeeded in establishing anything more than a nominal suzerainty over the country from which, in all probability, their temporary oppressors the Hyksos started to invade the delta of the Nile, in spite of the repeated attempts which they made to crush them with the assistance of the forces of Nineveh and Babylon.¹ The rulers of those two conterminous empires were so deeply engaged in quarrelling with one another that they could not render any effective assistance in the west, and the great conquerors Rameses I., Seto, and Rameses II. found it necessary to conciliate their obstinate opponents by entering into marriage and treaty connections with them. From the

¹ Thothmes IV. wrote about 1500 B.C. to Rimmonnivari, the king of Assyria, to ask his assistance against the Hittites of Marash and Carchemish, and half a century later we find Amenophis IV. connecting himself by marriage with Burnaburiash, the king of Babylon.

time that Rameses III. with difficulty repelled a sudden inroad of their armies at Pelusium until the year 877, when Assurnazirpal appeared before the gates of Carchemish and compelled the submission of Sangar its king, the Hittites seem to have enjoyed a period of comparative tranquillity. But thenceforward their power steadily waned, and in 717 the city, which had thrown off its allegiance to Assyria at the close of the reign of Tiglath Pileser II., was for the last time invested by Sargon, and its inhabitants carried away captive into Mesopotamia.

So numerous are the obviously artificial hillocks along the western banks of the Euphrates, that were it not for the excavations which have recently laid bare the lower courses of masonry at the foot of Jerablus there would be little to arrest attention except the peculiar form of the central mound and the enormous rampart which surrounds it on the east. The former is divided into two distinct parts, upon each of which are a few scattered blocks, marking, it may be, the position of the old palace and citadel, and on the opposite side from the river there was apparently a deep trench into which a small stream, which now flows at a short distance off, may have been originally diverted. Between the acropolis and the rampart lie

a series of slabs indicating, as at Boghaz Keni and Euyuk, the ground-plan of various buildings, and a long row of these ranged in an upright position lines the entire eastern base of the mound. Two only bear any traces of sculpture. The first has been cut in half, and the two human figures represented upon it seem to be intended for priests, wearing a dress almost identical with the Assyrian type, whereas those on the adjoining one are distinctly Hittite in character, and their feet, cased in the usual large shoes with upturned toes, rest on the back of a crouching lion. All the more interesting reliefs have been transported to Europe, and none on the spot appear to have been inscribed at all; but in a small village about a mile from the ruins a peasant offered me, among a heap of coins, a scaraboid seal of faience engraved with a small hawk and two hieroglyphs which are repeated over and over again on the large lettered tablets found at Jerablus, of which facsimiles are given by Mr. Wright in his *Empire of the Hittites*.

A gallop of two hours in the teeth of a biting wind brought us to the farm of Neijib Effendi, where we spent the night as usual surrounded by the cattle, and were roused at daybreak by the cooing of pigeons that roosted in the deep circular air-holes round the walls.

Every one was anxious to press on, for the weather had hopelessly broken up, and Haturi our Syrian cook suffered so dreadfully from the cold as he jogged along with his clanking armoury of pots and pans hung round his saddle, that swathe him as we would in cloaks and rugs of our own, he would sometimes arrive at the halting-place almost paralysed from internal cramp. Curiously enough, the higher class of Turks appear less susceptible to the inclemencies of winter than even Europeans, and I shall never forget the discomfort of an evening spent in the kaimakamlık at Bap, where we sat for hours in our fur cloaks shivering over a single exiguous brazier of charcoal. It was our last stage on the road: a small Arab town of curious mud huts, for all the world like a colony of beehives, nestling under the shadow of a mosque-crowned cliff. Within six hours after leaving it we had gained the grassy plateau which rims the vast Aleppo plain and commands the last glimpse of the snowy ridge of the Taurus; and right ahead of us the castle cliff rose from the mist-shrouded town like an island from the sea. The Vali had courteously sent his carriage to meet us, and we drove at once to the Azizieh quarter on the outskirts, where the Europeans reside, and a new and comfortable hotel has been recently built.

We stayed but two days, as we were anxious to catch the steamer at Alexandretta, and, judged by the standard of the large towns in the interior, Aleppo seemed to me decidedly unattractive. Hardly anything is left of the old buildings, though there are fine bits of Saracenic carving round the doorways of some of the mosques, and the projecting balconies of the modern houses, which almost meet across the narrow streets in the neighbourhood of the bazaar, do something to redeem them from absolute ugliness. Even the castle, with its deep moat and fine drawbridge resting on lofty arches and guarded by a massive square barbican, has been so shattered by repeated earthquakes that little now remains but the outer girdle of its walls, and the new barracks below have been largely constructed with the stones from its ruins. Water is still raised by the soldiers from two wells of enormous depth, which have been sunk in the enclosure, by means of wheels driven round by oxen or horses, and the Vali gave us several barbed wooden arrows which he said had been found in a niche in the wall, where they had remained ever since the attack of the Crusaders more than seven centuries ago.

A long day's drive over flat treeless country covered with reedy marshes and little straw-thatched

huts, a toilsome climb to the top of the 'Syrian gates,' from which the pretty village of Beilan, straggling along the fronting slopes of a narrow, well-watered gorge looks down upon the sparkling bay and the white crests of Amanus beyond—and, all too soon for us, the journey was at an end.

How much longer it will be possible for Europeans to visit the country under its existing conditions none can tell. To all appearances the authorities are bent on attempting every year to guard it more jealously from the prying gaze of the foreigner, oblivious of the fact that the verdict of even the most biassed eye-witness cannot produce an impression half so unfavourable to their rule as the suspicions necessarily engendered by their policy of concealment. No intelligent reader will repose unlimited confidence in the haphazard reflections of the traveller, and the more intimate one's knowledge of Turkey the more complex does the problem appear, and the less easy does it become to form a conclusion entirely satisfactory even to oneself. One thing, however, is certain, that nothing but harm can come from disguising the truth, and least of all will they be disposed to do so, who believe that the maintenance of a reformed administration is still of vital importance to Europe, as well

